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ABSTRACT

This research was designed to find out more about the characteristics of fathers who sexually abuse their daughters, with the goal of helping to prevent such abuse and to identify possibly high risk populations. The sample consisted of 118 recently identified incestuous biological fathers and a matched comparison group of 116 non-abusive biological fathers. The men were interviewed at length about their childhood experiences, family life, and sex and social histories. The incestuous fathers also provided detailed information on the sexual contacts with the daughter. The comparison fathers were simply asked about their relationship with their daughter. The study found the incestuous fathers to be a heterogeneous group on a variety of dimensions. Contrary to popular conceptions about incestuous fathers, some molested very young children; others molested older children. A large proportion molested children outside the family in addition to the incestuous abuse, while others only molested family members. Some had a general arousal to children; others did not. Five distinct types of incestuous fathers were identified: sexually preoccupied; adolescent regressives; instrumental sexual gratifiers; emotionally dependent; and angry retaliators. Incestuous fathers as a group manifested disturbances or traumas that may be useful in understanding the sources of their behavior and identifying high risk populations. Incestuous fathers did appear to have been less involved in caring for their daughters prior to the onset of abuse. (ABL)

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THE CHARACTERISTICS OF INCESTUOUS FATHERS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research was designed to find out more about the characteristics of fathers who sexually abuse their daughters, with the goal of helping to prevent such abuse and to identify possibly high risk populations. When we began this study, little was known about who is at risk to commit incest. Research indicated that offenders did not fit previously held stereotypes.

This study was designed to examine several possible risk factors, including:

1. Incestuous fathers may be men who were relatively uninvolved with their children and thus failed to develop a normal sense of protectiveness.

2. Incestuous fathers may be men who experienced physical or sexual abuse themselves while growing up or severe rejection by their own mothers or fathers, and thus failed to develop a normal sense of fathering.

3. Incestuous fathers may be men who have experienced severe deterioration in their marriages as well as problems with alcohol or drug abuse.

The sample consisted of 118 recently identified incestuous fathers and a matched comparison group of 116 non-abusive fathers. All the fathers were <u>biological</u> parents, and about half the sample was recruited from a special program for incestuous fathers in the U.S. Navy. The recruitment from the navy was to help test hypotheses about paternal absence and increased risk for abuse.

The men were interviewed at length about their childhood experiences, family life, and sex and social histories. The incestuous fathers also provided detailed information on the sexual contacts with the daughter. The comparison fathers were simply asked about their relationship with the daughter.

The study found incestuous fathers to be a heterogenous group on a variety of dimensions. Contrary to some popular conceptions about incestuous fathers, some molested very young children; others molested older children. A large proportion molested children outside the family in addition to the incestuous abuse, while others only molested family members. Some had a general sexual arousal to children; others did not.

We conclude that incestuous father are not a monolithic group. We were able to identify five distinct types of incestuous fathers, who appeared to differ on some important dimensions.

1. <u>Sexually preoccupied</u>. These men had clear and conscious sexual interest in the daughter, often from an early age. They generally began to molest the daughter when she was young, prior to age 10, the majority prior to age 6. These fathers committed a great many abusive acts over a longer time period and were more likely to have

sexually penetrated their victims. They tended to be extremely sexualized individuals, who often had extensive abuse and maltreatment histories in their own development.

2. Adolescent regressives. These men also had a conscious sexual interest in the daughter, but the interest did not begin until the daughter approached or actually reached puberty. In their accounts, many of these fathers sound like adolescents reliving the fascination, preoccupations and urges of their youth.

3. Instrumental sexual gratifiers. These men did not appear to experience sexual arousal specifically for the daughter, but used the daughter for gratification while fantasizing about some other partner. They had greater feelings of guilt or remorse and their abusive activity tended to be sporadic.

4. Emotionally dependent. For these lonely and depressed men, sexual arousal was not the primary aspect, but the abuse seemed to satisfy particularly urgent needs for closeness and comforting. They tended to romanticize the quality of their relationships with their daughters.

5. Angry retaliators. For these offenders, who also showed relatively little sexual arousal toward the daughter, the primary focus was anger toward their wives (and sometimes related anger at the child) for neglect, abandonment and actual or presumed infidelity.

Incestuous fathers as a group manifest disturbances or traumas that may be useful in understanding the sources of their behavior and identifying high risk populations. They are more likely to have been rejected by their parents, physically abused, or sexually abused when they themselves were children. They are more likely to have been sexually preoccupied or inept as a teenager, to have a high frequency of masturbation or to have committed adolescent offenses. They tended to be more anxious, poorly adjusted and avoidant of leadership as adults. They tended to be socially isolated, and have more difficulties in their marriages, including sexual problems and a higher proclivity toward violence.

Of interest, however: they do not report more parental or personal alcoholism. They have not had significantly greater exposure to child pornography. They do not seem to be deficient in general empathy, or have higher levels of criminal activity.

Incestuous fathers do appear to have been less involved in caring for their daughters prior to the onset of abuse. Fathers who were actively involved in the care of the daughter had a lower risk for incest. This difference persists when controlling for a wide variety of other background variables. These findings lend support to the idea that caretaking activities may confer some protection against later child sexual abuse. This lower involvement in caretaking is consistent with theory that suggests that caretaking potentiates some protective or inhibitory responses that make it less likely for a man to sexually abuse his child. However valuable father involvement may be, we urge extreme caution on those who would conclude that by encouraging paternal involvement we would have a powerful remedy for

incest. Any program designed to enhance father involvement in child care would do best to assess for the presence of other risk factors, such as a history of childhood abuse, and attempt to mediate these.

This research, as well as much clinical experience, suggests that we should focus our attention on how childhood trauma interferes with the ability to become a nurturant and protective parent. It is through identifying this pathway and its intervening processes that we may have the best chance to put social science theory to work.

Further analyses of the data presented in this report are currently underway. We will publish additional reports and papers on the connection between abuse in childhood and later incestuous offending and on the implications with at-risk men.

Finally, this research suggests that we should stop treating incestuous fathers as a monolithic group. The typology of offenders which we have developed and the multiple pathways to becoming an incestuous father suggest that prevention and treatment programs must no longer conceptualize incestuous abuse in a unidimensional way if they are to be successful in conferring advantages to children and reducing risk for abuse.

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Father-daughter incest has attracted substantial research interest (Williams & Finkelhor, 1990) because of the unexpectedly large number of such cases which come to the attention of child welfare authorities in the U.S. and other developed countries.[1]

Although exact figures are not available, surveys suggest that as many as one in six girls are incestuously abused and one in 20 girls may suffer sexual abuse by a father, stepfather, or adopted father during their childhood (Russell, 1986). Translated into incidence figures, this yields an estimate of about 100,000 new cases of incest every year. While women are more at risk for sexual abuse from stepfathers, one in every hundred girls is sexually abused by her own, biological, father.

Awareness of the scope of the problem has led to increased interest in the question of why such abuse occurs. A wide variety of theories has been proposed, including the idea that abusive fathers are re-enacting abuse which they themselves suffered and that such abuse is the outgrowth of a dysfunctional marital relationship.

This project, funded to address the pressing need for more extensive research on incest offenders, started with some different premises. Several new hypotheses about incest offenders, suggested by a variety of new thinking and research, are the focus of this study:

1. Bonding and empathy failure. There is research from the ethological and anthropological literature which suggests that a biobehavioral process might be at work in the intimate interaction between a very young child and his/her family members to discourage sexual attraction later on. One of the strongest pieces of evidence in support of this idea is the fact that children are more at risk for sexual abuse from stepfathers, particularly those who were not in the home at the time of the child's infancy, than from natural fathers who were. Several possible mechanisms may be at work. First, experiencing a child as a vulnerable infant may engage a form of empathy and protective feelings that stand in the way of later sexual interaction with that child. Second, close physical interaction with a young child may create a kind of "familiarity" that inhibits seeing that child as a sexual object later on. Some preliminary work by Parker and Parker (1986) has confirmed this line of thinking and suggested that vulnerability to incest may be directly correlated with the amount of time spent in early close child care. This hypothesis, if true, has important implications for the prevention of incest. There are obviously many fathers who have little contact with their children and do not commit incest, demonstrating that other inhibitory factors are also involved. Still, the encouragement of closer bonds may be a strategy to decrease the risk of incestuous abuse.

2. Sexualization of emotional expression. Some observers have pointed out that the sexualization of the parent-child role may be part of a larger tendency for men to sexualize many kinds of close relationships. Men, more than women, and some men more than others, appear to have difficulty in conducting intimate human relationships that do not have an overt sexual component. Theory about male socialization suggests that this tendency stems from the fact that boys are denied opportunities to get their needs for dependency, closeness and tenderness met, and are only offered these

opportunities later in life through sexual relationships. Thus, sexual relationships become the only legitimate vehicle for satisfying the most basic human needs for closeness. If this theory were true, it would have important implications both for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of abusers.

3. Sexualization of dominance. Research on rape suggests that cultural messages which eroticize aggressive behavior toward women play a role in increasing the proclivity of men to rape. It is likely that there are analogous messages that operate in regard to child sexual abuse. One possibility is that sexual behavior toward children is legitimated by a cultural value system which eroticizes youthfulness, smallness and dependency/vulnerability. These messages eroticizing children are prominent for men in the American culture, and may be even more important in some subcultures than in others. It is possible that those men who become sexual with children are more likely to hold attitudes and beliefs which endorse such child-like characteristics as sexually attractive and arousing. Support for this hypothesis would also have important social implications. Measures of sexualization of dominance and emotions might be used to help identify classes of men at high risk for committing sexual abuse.

In addition to bonding and sexualization of emotions and dominance, there are a number of other factors in the literature which have been related to the risk of becoming a child sex abuser. This study is investigating these potential risk factors which have not been the basis of adequate scientific research:

4. Early sexual victimization. Many sex abusers appear to have themselves been subjected to early sexual contact with adults. A number of studies seem to support this notion, including Gebhard, et al. (1965), Groth and Burgess (1979), Langevin, et al.(1985), Strand (1986) and Baker (1985). Rates range from 18% to 57% of abusers reporting having been molested. The exact proportion of abusers who have themselves suffered sexual abuse is difficult to determine from these studies because of variations in both the definitions of sexual abuse used by investigators and the nature of the samples studied. The significance of the history of child sexual abuse has been hard to gauge because the abusers studied were often a select sample of convicted offenders and also because of the lack of adequate control groups. In this study we have overcome many of these difficulties.

5. Alcohol use by the abuser. Many studies show that alcohol involvement accompanies sexual abuse, meaning that the offender was an alcoholic and/or drinking at the time of the offense. It has been found that from 19% to 49% of child molesters have drinking problems (Finkelhor, 1986, p. 116). Once again, many of these studies have relied on samples of convicted or incarcerated sex abusers. This study examined the role of alcohol among a more representative sample of abusers and a comparison group to better understand its etiological significance for child sexual abuse.

6. Socialization into deviant practices (via pornography or exposure to deviant sexual values). The hypothesis that child molesters may learn arousal from exposure to pornography or may develop a sexually deviant value system has not been investigated extensively. A study by Goldstein, Kant and Hartman (1973) found that pedophiles had somewhat less exposure to pornography than had control groups. However, their study focused on

exposure to pornography portraying adult heterosexual activities, not child pornography and was limited to convicted offenders. Our study measures use of a wide array of pornographic materials and includes a broad range of perpetrators.

7. Marital discord. Disappointments and trauma in adult family life and adult heterosexual relationships may trigger pedophilic activity (Finkelhor, 1986, p. 110). Gebhard, et al. (1965) found that incestuous offenses always started during times of marital stress. Studies of clinical populations by Peters (1976) and Groth (1979) report similar findings. There has been no good quantified evidence provided. Our study of a matched sample of sex abusers and non-abusers permits examination of the impact of marital discord on child sexual abuse.

1. An estimated 119,200 cases of sexual abuse involving caretakers came to professional attention in the United States in 1986, up 178% since 1980, of which about two-fifths involved fathers or stepfathers as perpetrators (Sedlak, 1991a,b).

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Chapter 2: METHODOLOGY

Our data collection took place in 1989 to 1991. We interviewed 118 recently identified incestuous biological fathers[1] and a matched comparison group of 116 non-incestuous fathers.[2]

The exclusive focus on biological fathers reflects our design to test certain specific biosocial hypotheses about the role of paternal absence as a risk factor for incest. The focus on biological fathers is warranted because this is a very important subgroup of incestuous offenders, whose behavior is the most damaging to children and most violative of incest prohibitions. The uniformity of the biological and social role between offenders and victims in this relatively large sample allowed our typological effort to attend to other distinctions.

The 55 navy incestuous fathers were part of the Navy Family Support Program which is responsible for handling all cases of intrafamilial sexual abuse that come to their attention. All the fathers who met the eligibility criteria (see Note 1) and could be located by our researchers were asked to take part in the study. The 63 civilian incestuous fathers were identified for us by 25 treatment providers around the nation. Again, all of the men who met eligibility requirements and could be located were asked to participate.

As is the case with most research on child sexual abusers, this study included only those men whose abuse was detected. Among these, however, we have cast a wide net. We had the cooperation of a diverse array of treatment providers including community mental health settings, private practitioners, specialized programs for sex offenders, self-help groups, and correctional programs. We actively pursued interviews with all eligible subjects, not only with immediate volunteers. For this reason, our sample has diversity in age and current marital status as well as in the histories of the fathers that other studies sometimes lack. The sample also included some deniers (5%). Only one-fifth of the men were in prison at the time of the interview. While a large proportion of the men were in or had been in treatment (98%), they were in many different programs and at different stages in their treatment. It is likely that participation in treatment made many of these men more articulate when discussing the details of the abuse and their own backgrounds, thoughts and attitudes.

The comparison group of non-incestuous fathers was located via an exhaustive telephone solicitation in several states. They were matched on age of the father, age of the daughter, education and occupation. The navy comparison fathers were selected randomly through a navy computerized search of the records of all service members and their dependents. They were also matched on rank and year of entry into the navy.

Our navy sample is, in some ways, more representative of incestuous fathers (at least, those whose abuse is disclosed) than are samples of incestuous fathers solicited solely from civilian treatment programs.[3] All disclosed cases of incestuous abuse by U.S. Navy personnel are reported to the Navy Family Support Program and all biological fathers involved in these cases were asked to participate in the study. Only one navy man was incarcerated, while about one-third of the civilian fathers were.

However, in all the samples, navy and civilian, incest and control, there were substantial numbers of eligible men who declined to participate. In the case of the incestuous fathers, we do not know the exact number of men invited to participate, or how many of the men who declined actually would have met the study criteria. This was also true for the civilian comparisons. In the case of the navy comparison group, however, we do know that of the 81 who were contacted to participate, 34% refused. In the absence of good information on refusals and its impact on the study, we must caution readers that our samples must not be taken as representative of either incestuous fathers or fathers in general.

Trained interviewers spent an average of five hours with each subject to gather the detailed data collected in this study. At the time of the interview, the fathers ranged in age from 23 to 55, with an average age of 39. At the time of the onset of the sexual contact with the daughter, the incestuous fathers ranged in age from 20 to 50. A majority of the men were white (93%). Most had graduated from high school (83%) and nearly half (48%) had attended or graduated from college. They were primarily working in skilled positions with a median income (based on their own individual salaries/wages, etc.) of $25,000.

Hundreds of questions were asked of the fathers over the course of the four- to six-hour interview. Brief desciptions of the instruments used in the interview protocol follow. Copies of all the instruments used are contained in Appendix A.

A. Demographics and Family of Origin Interview:
57 Items — Completion time: 20 minutes

Purpose: to collect information on the demographic characteristics of the father and his family of origin.

B. Parent/ Child Relations Questionnaire:
68 Items (self administered) — Completion time: 10 minutes

Purpose: to collect information about his family of origin and relations with mother and father.

C. Military Data Form:
23 Items — Completion time: 5-10 minutes

Purpose: to collect information on the subject's history in the Navy.

D. Marital and Family Relations Questionnaire:
108 Items — Completion time: 30 minutes

Purpose: fathers are asked to describe the state of their relationship with their wife/partner at the time just before the onset of the sexual abuse with the index daughter. Data are also collected on the pregnancy and birth of the index daughter and his involvement in her caregiving.

E. Index of Marital Satisfaction:
25 items Completion time: 5 minutes

Purpose: This form focuses on the relationship with the wife/partner just prior to the onset of the sexual contacts with the index daughter.

F. Pregnancy/ Infancy Questionnaire:
14 items Completion time: 5 minutes

Purpose: focuses on the father's feelings while his wife was pregnant with the index daughter and shortly after her birth.

G. Separation Log:
19 items Completion time: 5 minutes each

Purpose: to collect information on separations of one month or longer between the father and his index daughter. Up to five of these forms are completed for each subject.

H. Fathering Activities:
56 items Completion Time : 15 minutes total

Purpose: to discover the extent and nature of the father's child caregiving activities during specific periods of the index daughter's development.

I. Sexual Behavior Interview:
108 Items Completion time: 1 hour

Purpose: to collect information about his sexual development, early childhood sexual experiences, experiences with being sexually victimized or with sexually victimizing others, experiences with masturbation and pornography.

J. Index of Sexual Satisfaction:
25 Items Completion time: 5-10 minutes

Purpose: to collect information on the father's sexual satisfaction with the sexual relationship with his partner just before the onset of the sexual contact with the index daughter.

K. Childhood Incident Form:
50 Items Completion time: 10 minutes each (average)

Purpose: To collect information on childhood sexual experiences reported in questions 33-47 on the Sex Behavior Interview.

L. Initiator Incident Form:
50 Items Completion Time: 10 minutes each (average)

Purpose: to collect detailed information on sexual experiences reported in questions 48-61 in the sexual behavior form. (Sexual abuse initiated by subject.)

M. Daughter Incident Form:
71 Items Completion Time: 30 minutes

Purpose: This form is designed to collect information on the victimization of the index daughter.

N. Sexual Experiences Questionnaire
71 Items Completion Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: records sexual interests and experiences with adults and children males and females. Is self-administered and may allow for disclosure of information not provided directly to the interviewer.

O. Multiphasic Sex Inventory:
105 Items Completion Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: to record sexual experiences and thoughts especially deviant sexual experiences.

P. IFCNScale:
160 Items Completion Time: 30 minutes

Purpose: to measure sexualization of emotions, dominance and children.

Q. Social History Interview:
50 Items Completion Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: to collect information on father's social interactions outside the family, his history of crime and delinquency, drug and alcohol use, and mental illness/ psychiatric care.

R. Index of Self Esteem:
39 Items Completion Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: to measure self-esteem and empathy.

S. 16 PF:
102 Items Completion Time: 30 minutes

Purpose: Standardized test of personalty attributes.

T. Treatment Progress Form:
17 Items

Purpose: Completed by therapist and reports details of abuse, treatment received, treatment process and prognosis.

1. The incestuous fathers were all men who molested a biological daughter, born since January 1, 1970. In nearly all of the cases, disclosure of the abuse had occurred since January 1, 1986.

2. Two of the incestuous fathers (from the navy sample) do not have matches in the comparison group. Many comparative analyses include only the matched pairs of men. Therefore, the "N" will vary by several men in some analyses. When, for example, the data from one father were missing, his match was excluded from the analysis.

3. For this reason, we routinely conducted two data analyses: one with all cases included and another with only the navy cases.

Chapter 3: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

This chapter briefly outlines some of the bivariate relationships and risks associated with these factors and incestuous abuse. We examine the fathers' own childhood experiences, his sexual history, marital and family relationships, psychological functioning, and social history.[1]

Table 3-1: Incestuous and Non-Incestuous Fathers' Childhood Experiences (N = 234)

Childhood Experiences	IF	CN	Sig.	Odds Ratio
Lonely	82%	46%	***	(5.29)
Lived apart from father	47%	36%		
Lived apart from mother	30%	17%	*	(2.02)
Changed living situations	43%	32%		
Resided in an institution	5%	3%		
Father alcohol problem	36%	35%		
Mother alcohol problem	11%	10%		
Problem with stealing	34%	25%		
Problem with bedwetting	30%	22%		
Problem with fire setting	21%	10%	*	(2.33)
Problem with school failure	52%	29%	***	(2.63)
<u>Abuse History</u>				
Severe abuse by father	54%	21%	***	(4.54)
Severe abuse by mother	37%	14%	***	(3.72)
Rejection by mother	67%	30%	***	(4.79)
Rejection by father	31%	6%	***	(6.77)
Child sexual abuse	70%	32%	***	(5.06)

TABLE 3-1 RESULTS

The most significant difference between the childhoods of incestuous fathers and non-incestuous fathers was the greater proportion of incestuous fathers who were subjected to abuse and rejection. Incestuous fathers were more likely to have been rejected by their parents, severely physically abused by parents, and sexually abused others. On a bivariate level, those rejected by their father were over five times as likely to incestuously abuse a daughter. Interestingly, incestuous and non-incestuous fathers did not differ in the proportion who reported that mother or father had alcohol problems.

The incestuous fathers were also more likely to have lived apart from their own mothers during some part of their childhood and experienced more loneliness. Their histories of fire setting and school failure may simply reflect that they were suffering from abuse.

Table 3-2: Incestuous and Non-Incestuous Fathers' Sex History (N = 234)

Sex history	IF	CN	Sig.	Odds Ratio
x Age 1st intercourse	15.6	16.9	**	
Sexually active teen	31%	38%		
Sexually promiscuous teen	27%	15%	*	(2.17)
Sexually preoccupied teen	53%	32%	**	(2.36)
Sexually shy teen	74%	71%		
Sexually inept teen	36%	20%	**	(2.29)
Sexually normal teen	60%	89%	***	(.19)
Daily masturbation	26%	16%		(1.84)
Used pornography with masturbation in youth	46%	36%		
Seen child pornography	21%	13%		
Frequency masturbated to pornography	21%	2%	***	(14.7)
Sex education by friends/peers	27%	41%	*	(.547)
Sex education as victim	23%	4%	***	(8.29)

TABLE 3-2 RESULTS

Incestuous fathers described themselves as more sexually preoccupied and promiscuous as a teen, but also as more sexually shy and inept. Fewer described their teen years as sexually normal.

Indeed, the incestuous fathers reported that they were more likely to have masturbated on a daily basis at some time during their teen years and there was a trend for incestuous fathers to have more often seen and used pornography. Not surprisingly incestuous fathers, who had experienced more sexual abuse as a child, were less likely to have obtained information for sex education from friends and peers and more likely to say their primary sex education was the result of a victimization experience.

Table 3-3: Incestuous and Non-Incestuous Fathers' Sexual Victimization History (N = 234)

	IF	CN
Sexually Abused in Childhood	70%	32%
Abused by Multiple Perpetrators	45%	13%
Abused by:		
Mother	12%	0%
Father	9%	0%
Brother	8%	1%
Sister	6%	3%
Male Cousin	8%	1%
Uncle	7%	0%
Female Cousin	5%	3%
Aunt	5%	0%
Grandfather	1%	0%
Non-Family Adult Male	35%	14%
Non-Family Adult Female	24%	14%
Non-Family Male Juvenile	13%	3%
Non-Family Female Juvenile	11%	4%
Stranger	16%	13%

TABLE 3-3 RESULTS

Seventy percent of incestuous fathers report that they were sexually abused in childhood. While the largest category of offender was adult male non-family members, about one in eight incestuous fathers report sexual abuse by their own mothers or mother figures and 1 in 10 report sexual abuse by their own fathers or father figures. When the comparison fathers were abused in childhood, they were most likely to have been abused by non-family members, usually older adult males or females. Interestingly, 16% of the incestuous fathers and 13% of the comparison fathers were sexually abused by strangers.

Table 3-4: Incestuous and Non-Incestuous Fathers' Marriage and Family Relationships (N = 234)

Marriage and family relationships	IF	CN	Sig.
Marital (dis)satisfaction score	45.8	27.6	***
Sexual (dis)satisfaction score	35	18.3	***
Ever separated due to marital conflict	36%	35%	
Ever violent to wife/partner	19%	6%	**
x # extramarital affairs	2.55	2.03	
Physical violence to daughter			
spank	87%	78%	
other minor violence	43%	21%	***
severe violence	40%	12%	***
emotional abuse	83%	78%	
x Emotional abuse score	2.22	1.59	***
x Other minor violence score	.49	.22	***
x Severe violence score	.55	.13	***

TABLE 3-4 RESULTS

Not only were incestuous fathers more likely to have been abused in childhood, but they were more likely to physically abuse their partners and daughters.

They were also more likely to report marital and sexual dissatisfaction prior to the onset of the sexual contact with the daughter, though they were not more likely than the comparison fathers to have had separations due to marital conflict or to engage in extramarital affairs. This is perhaps a reflection of greater isolation and introversion (see next table), which may have led them to stay in unsatisfactory relationships.

Table 3-5: Incestuous and Non-Incestuous Fathers' Psychological Functioning and Personality (N = 234)

Psychological functioning and personality	IF	CN	Sig.
x Low self-esteem score	39.2	25.6	***
x 16 Personality Factor score			
A - warmth	4.49	4.95	
B - intelligence	5.38	5.49	
C - emotional stability	4.98	5.80	**
E - dominance	5.66	5.45	
F - impulsivity	4.89	5.39	*
G - conformity	6.08	5.98	
H - boldness	4.16	5.11	***
I - sensitivity	5.34	5.24	
L - suspiciousness	5.89	5.12	**
M - imagination	5.18	4.98	
N - shrewdness	6.34	5.68	**
O - insecurity	6.27	5.19	***
Q1 - radicalism	5.39	5.48	
Q2 - self-sufficiency	6.65	6.13	*
Q3 - self-discipline	5.33	5.57	
Q4 - tension	6.35	5.55	**
extraversion	4.02	4.92	**
anxiety	6.36	5.35	***
tough poise	5.81	5.95	
independence	5.11	5.37	
control	5.82	5.87	
adjustment	4.76	5.71	***
leadership	5.09	5.80	***
creativity	5.75	5.67	
x Empathy score	4.82	5.02	

TABLE 3-5 RESULTS

Incestuous fathers had lower self-esteem scores than comparison fathers. In general, the 16 Personality Factor Scale scores reflect a picture of more anxious and more introverted, socially insecure and retiring men.

Table 3-6: Incestuous and Non-Incestuous Fathers' Social History (N = 234)

Social history	IF	CN	Sig.
Alcohol problems	57%	44%	
Prior arrest	46%	40%	
Friendships			
Had 1 or more friends	68%	96%	***
Confided in friend	47%	73%	***
Considered self outgoing	44%	76%	***
Felt he had enough people to talk to about personal problems	39%	90%	***
Went out with friends more than once a month	32%	54%	**
Socialized with friends more than once a month	49%	69%	**
Socially active more than once a month	34%	59%	***
Derived a great deal of satisfaction from friends	26%	57%	***

TABLE 3-6 RESULTS

Although there was a trend for incestuous fathers to have more alcohol problems and prior arrests than non-incestuous fathers, this difference was not statistically significant. The rate was high for both groups, which perhaps reflects the success of our matching technique. Other studies which have shown differences on these variables may have had less comparable groups of non-incestuous fathers.

In regard to friendships, there is a significant difference on all variables. Incestuous fathers consistently described themselves as more lonely and isolated with fewer friends and social activities in the time preceding the onset of the sexual contact with the daughter.

Table 3-7: Incestuous Fathers' Other Sexual Offending (N = 118)

Juvenile Sex Abuse	34%
Ever Committed Any Other Sex Abuse	58%
Ever Abused Child (other than daughter)	52%
As Adult, Abused a Child Other than Daughter	39%
Ever Abused an Adult	

TABLE 3-7 RESULTS

Contrary to common perception that incestuous fathers do not abuse other children and are likely to commit a solitary offense, 34% of the men began sexual victimizing of others before they were 18. Fifty-eight percent had sexually abused someone in addition to the daughter and 52% had at some time abused another child. Forty-two percent denied any other sexual abuse. Notably in adulthood, 39% had abused a child in addition to the daughter, and 15% had sexually abused an adult male or female.

Table 3-8: Attitudes and Cognitions of Incestuous Fathers (N = 118)

Item	Sig. Correlation with IF	% of IF's Who Endorse
Sexually attracted to children	**	18%
Small women most sexually attractive	*	39%
Sex with parent doesn't harm experienced teen	**	13%
Sexually abused children are more harmed by fuss than abuse	*	13%
Sexual abuse explained by drunkeness	*	23%
Father fondling daughter is not harmful	*	6%
Sex with child is way to show love	*	14%
Easy to understand brother/ sister sex	**	18%
Wife has duty to have sex with her husband	*	21%
Would rape if knew he could get away with it	*	14%
Would have sex with a child if knew he could get away with it	**	20%

TABLE 3-8 RESULTS

The most remarkable feature of Table 3-8 is that such a large proportion of incestuous fathers, whose abuse was disclosed and who are still in treatment, respond in ways which reveal their faulty cognitions about men, women, children, and sex. While not more likely than the comparison fathers to endorse some items about children and sex such as "a child who walks in front of you with no clothes on is trying to turn you on," they were significantly more likely to endorse many other more subtle items. This may reflect distortions based on their own victimization experiences as much as rationalizations designed to excuse their adult abusive behaviors.

1. In Tables 3-1 through 3-8:
   *** - $p < .001$
   ** - $p < .01$
   * - $p < .05$

Chapter 4: THE ONSET OF INCEST: A TYPOLOGY

Introduction

In the study of child molesters, intrafamilial offenders have been relatively neglected. In some of the better research (Knight, et al., 1989), they have been excluded entirely. In some studies (Abel, et al., 1983; Langevin, et al., 1985; Marshall, et al., 1986), small numbers are included as a distinct, but undifferentiated category.

The neglect is disappointing in light of the large number of such cases being presented to clinicians. Of the estimated 119,200 cases of child sexual abuse which came to the attention of professionals in 1986 (year of the last national incidence study), 51% involved parental figures (Sedlak, 1991a). The same study also showed that the incidence of such cases had increased 30% per year since 1981 (Sedlak, 1991b), and data indicate continuing increases in the late 1980s (Sedlak, 1991b). Epidemiological surveys of adults suggest that 23% to 50% of retrospectively recalled sexual abuse is intrafamilial, and as much as 1% to 6% of American women have experienced abuse by a father or stepfather (Finkelhor, 1985).

Unfortunately, in the absence of detailed studies, there has been a tendency to treat incestuous offenders as an undifferentiated group. Many attempts to develop typologies of child molesters have lumped incestuous offenders into a single category (Cohen, et al., 1979; Groth, 1978; Swanson, 1971), and the most sophisticated study excluded them entirely (Knight, et al., 1989). While typological distinctions have been developed for other sex offender subgroups (Knight, et al., 1985), this has not been done for incestuous offenders.

Nonetheless, the small literature on incestuous abusers does suggest marked heterogeneity in this group. For example, in contrast to early theorizing, some of these offenders do indeed have generalized sexual arousal to children (Marshall, et al., 1986; Langevin, et al., 1985; and Langevin, 1985). Some commit a variety of other sexual offenses in addition to the intrafamily abuse (Abel, et al., 1983, 1987). Research has shown large variations in treatment efficacy with incestuous fathers (Saunders, et al., 1989; Simkins, et al., 1990). This suggests the utility and feasibility of finding a classification scheme that captures the diversity among incestuous offenders.

This chapter reports some of the data obtained from the portion of the interview when the incestuous father discussed his sexual abuse of his daughter. We elicited his responses to open-ended questions on what led up to his first sexual interest in and sexual contact with his daughter.

Findings

We found interesting the heterogeneity of the men's descriptions of the onset of sexual interest in and contact with the daughters. This heterogeneity of incestuous fathers suggests important distinctions which may be relevant to both prevention and treatment agenda.

First, there is wide variation in the age of the daughter at the time of onset of the molestation, ranging from 4 weeks to 15 years old. While the average age of the daughter at the time of onset of sexual contact was eight, this number disguises a bimodal distribution of age of the daughter. Fathers were more likely to start abuse when their daughter was 4 to 6 years old or 10 to 12 years old than to initiate the abuse when she was 7, 8, or 9 years old (Figure 4-1). And, many of the daughters were very young at the time of the onset of the sexual contact. Nine percent of the daughters were 3 years old and younger when the sexual contact began. In fact, in several of the cases the child was a very small infant when the sexual abuse began. Thirty-six percent were under 7 years and 58% were under 10 years of age when the first sexual contact occurred. This wide age variation may have implications for targeting prevention programs.

What may be even more important to our understanding of the onset of incest is the daughter's age at the time of the father's first sexual interest. Some men had sexual feelings from the time the daughter was quite young and many developed the sexual feelings for the daughter long before they began any sexual contact with her. We found that while 16% reported no conscious sexual interest in their daughter, six percent stated that they always had sexual interest in the daughter; that is, that sexual interest began in infancy. (This denial of sexual interest should not be considered as a denial of sexual contact. The sexual contact may have occurred for reasons that did not have to do with sexual interest. See below--angry retaliator.) Three-fourths of the fathers developed sexual interest at some other time. More detailed specification of the onset of sexual interest was possible for 89 men. The next figure (4-2) shows the complete breakdown of cases. Fifteen percent reported never having sexual interest in the daughter, 22% said interest developed concurrent with the onset of the sexual contact, and 63% said the sexual interest preceded the sex contact by weeks, months and in many cases, years. Twenty-three percent of the men reported that sexual interest in the daughter preceded the contact by one year or more.

The men also report varying degrees of awareness of their sexual interest in the daughter. For 43% of the fathers this sexual interest developed gradually, while for the rest it "clicked on" suddenly. So, here we see evidence that for many fathers, there is a significant time lapse between first arousal and first contact. The fathers reported numerous precursors to the first sexual contact with the daughter, including masturbation to fantasies about her, casually exhibiting their genitals to her, and actually grooming her to accept touching of private parts (Table 4-1).

Onset stimuli

We abstracted information on onset stimuli from the fathers' answers to a series of 10 open-ended questions about what led up to the sexual contact with the daughter. For example, we asked each man if he could remember a time when his daughter had no sexual appeal. We asked about the first occasion that he "remembers feeling some kind of sexual interest or experiencing sexual arousal for (his) daughter." And, we asked him to "describe what was happening, what (he was) doing and thinking." Based on

his answers to the 10 questions, we recorded all of the onset stimuli mentioned. Many men mentioned multiple stimuli.

Tables 4-2, 4-3, and 4-4 list the onset stimuli or triggers which the men mentioned. Most of the men referred to some activity that triggered sexual interest and many different contexts were described. About one-fourth of the men mentioned that they were kissing, hugging or holding the daughter when their first sexual interest occurred. A similar proportion were aroused when they were engaged in some activity which permitted them to see the daughter's naked body. Many reported becoming interested in the daughter when engaged in typical caretaking activities such as bathing or putting the child to bed. Many of the activities involved physical intimacy and contact in situations which exposed her genitals to him (e.g., bathing and sleeping together), but some quite mundane activities were also mentioned such as watching TV and wrestling or horseplay.

The fathers tended to describe most vividly how first arousal and sexual interest was triggered by her physical characteristics (Table 4-3). Many (37%) reported specific arousal to some quality of the daughter's body. Frequently noted were her smell and softness and the look of her skin. A large proportion mentioned the physical shape or size of her body. Many of the fathers also mentioned quite frankly the pubertal changes in her body, frequently the budding of breasts. Stimulation by the sight of the daughter's genitals was mentioned by 19%, some specifying the child-like qualities and others the emergence of adult-like secondary sexual characteristics. One incestuous father said:

> I didn't start to be sexually aroused to her until she first developed breasts when she was about 12 years old. I had already been involved in fondling young breasts before and I had a fascination seeing them. I thought I'd try to have more opportunity to see her nude. The first contact came when I was comforting her after she had an argument with my wife. I had a good excuse to fondle and hold her close to me to get aroused.

Another man said:

> I had no interest in my daughter until she was five. The change in the shape of her body brought about my sexual interest. Also, I felt that at five years old she was able to be stimulated by the same things I was. I tickled her, cuddled her and gave her special privileges to work up to fondling her. I began molesting her when she was six. This continued for four years.

Many of the incestuous fathers mentioned some contribution of the wife or problems in his relationship with her (Table 4-4). However, problems with his wife was rarely the only factor identified. Many men spoke of unmet emotional needs. But many references to the wife were similar to the following:

> My sexual thoughts began before my daughter was six years old. Then, after she turned six I started fantasizing about her. The first occasion I had sexual feelings about her was when I saw her

naked in the shower when she was around age six. She was developing more and I got excited when I saw her bare vagina. My sexual interest developed slowly as I saw her getting bigger. Also my married life was deteriorating. She was six years old when I started masturbating to fantasies of her body and what it would feel like to touch and enter her vagina. My wife and I separated. I started touching my daughter when she was nine, on weekend visitations. I started by tickling her and then I would touch her bare breasts and vagina. I also had oral sex with her.

Work difficulties, often based on relationship problems or problems with handling stress on the job, were mentioned by 8% of the men. Psychological problems such as depression and feelings of worthlessness (low self-esteem) were mentioned by under one-fourth of the men.

While one-third reported being under the influence of alcohol during the time (or some of the time) when the sexual contact occurred and about one-tenth reported being under the influence of a drug (most commonly marijuana), alcohol or drugs were mentioned as a factor in the onset of sexual feelings or abuse by only 9% of the men. The incestuous fathers are not more likely than the comparison fathers to have drug or alcohol abuse problems, although they may use alcohol or drugs to lower their inhibitions to abuse. But, alcohol may be an important factor in one or more of the subtypes of incestuous fathers.

Formulating the typology

Knight, et al. (1985) have thoughtfully analyzed the process for developing classification schemes of sexual offenders. Although they describe several models, they emphasize in all of them the importance of shifting back and forth between theoretical formulation and empirical assessment. In the present typology, we began with a theoretically based, as opposed to inductive, approach. In later reports we will use statistical (including cluster) analysis to test and refine the formulations reported here.

As described by Knight and his colleagues, the theoretical approach starts by delineating a group of the major theoretical domains along which distinctions among sex offenders have been hypothesized and which may be relevant to the group being analyzed. These have included age of victim, closeness of relationship to victim, degree of sexual fixation, and presence of aggression. In examining our case material, one of the dimensions that differentiated these incestuous fathers most conspicuously was whether they experienced sexual attraction and arousal to their daughter as an important component to the onset of sexual contact. A subgroup of about 40% of the fathers had little such arousal, and seemed to form a separate group.

We also noted a bimodal distribution in the ages of onset, with sexual contact more likely to start either between ages 4 to 6 or between ages 10 to 12, suggesting pubescence as an important factor in some offenses or for some offenders. The age distinction appeared to be more important and to have more applicability to the group of men who experienced arousal, and strongly colored the kinds of descriptions they gave of the onset process. Those attracted to pubescent daughters had a certain fascination with the girls'

development that closely resembled the experience of teenage boys. We termed these Adolescent Regressives. By contrast, those attracted to prepubertal daughters had a different pattern that tended to be characterized by an intensity of general sexual preoccupation that extended beyond their daughters to include other sexual deviance. We called these Sexually Preoccupied.

Among the fathers who experienced little or weak arousal, it seemed theoretically important to look at the motivation of the abuse. We were able to distinguish two primary nonsexual motives that quite clearly identified two subgroups: (1) needy and dependent men who had, from their point of view, close and, from our point of view, enmeshed relationships with the daughter and whom we called the Emotionally Dependent; and (2) angry men -- we called them Angry Retaliators -- who had more distant relationships with the daughter and were usually furious with their wives.

There was another distinct group that could not be clustered into one of these other categories. These were men who had little sexual arousal specifically to the daughters, but whose motivation for abuse nonetheless seemed primarily to be sexual gratification. They appeared to be somewhat of a hybrid group between those with strong and weak sexual interest: they had little specific sexual arousal to their daughters, but they were using them for a sexual gratification nonetheless. We called this group the Instrumental Sexual Gratifiers.

The delineation of these five types follows what Knight and associates call a hierarchical model, and can be illustrated with the decision tree shown in Figure 4-3. Based on this decision tree and related descriptions, we were able to classify 80% of the men. The unclassifiable cases included those men who denied all abuse, and those who provided very meager information that would allow us to judge issues related to arousal or motivation. As in all typologies, among the cases we did classify, some clearly fit and others were more difficult to categorize. We also found some individuals who seemed to be hybrids or crosses among types, and others who we thought might be the basis for new subtypes, if we had a larger population of cases.

In the next section, we will describe the types more fully, and in some cases subgroups that exist within them. We then demonstrate how the data support this categorization.

Type 1: Sexually Preoccupied

These fathers (about a quarter of the sample) had clear and conscious (often obsessive) sexual interest in their daughters, sometimes from a very early age. In describing the source of their attraction, they mentioned the arousing characteristics specifically and often in detail. For example, they mentioned the shape of her body, her smell or the look of her genitals. They described, sometimes enthusiastically, the sexual acts they engaged in. They gave clear evidence of the arousal and titillation they felt in their daughter's body. They reported the least guilt and shame and the most excitation and pleasure at the time they commit the abuse.

Almost all these men began molesting their daughters prior to age 10, the majority prior to age 6. On average, they reported that the daughter was 4 years old at the time of their (the father's) first arousal. Not all of the fathers acted immediately upon recognition of their sexual interest. Grooming played an important part, especially because the daughters were young and readily manipulated.

One important subcategory in this type is comprised of the men who perceived their child as a sex object almost from the time she was born. Forty-two percent of the men classified as Sexually Preoccupied reported such early preoccupation. We have called them "Early Sexualizers."

> One father reported that he had been stimulated by the sight of his daughter nursing and that he could never remember a time when he did not have sexual feelings for her. He began sexually abusing her when she was four weeks old, fondling her genitals and placing his penis in her mouth.

> Another father reported that from the first time he saw his daughter in the hospital, he was "afraid something (sexual) might happen." And another man said his sexual attraction to his daughter "began when she was three days old," "the first time she came home from the hospital and my mother-in-law was giving her a bath. I was looking at her vagina... just knowing that she was a virgin and knowing that she was mine (was sexually arousing.)"

These men were extremely sexualized, and often had serious histories of extensive abuse and maltreatment in their own development. To some extent their preoccupation seemed to blind them to any empathy for the child and overwhelm any inhibition about the propriety of such feelings. One-third of these men reported that they engaged in daily masturbation at the time just preceding the onset of the sexual contact with the daughter. And the average number of incidents involving sexual contact with the daughter was 585 for this group (median=100). They were more likely than were men in the other groups to have sexually penetrated the daughter (83%) or to have forced the daughter to perform fellatio (63%). These men were so sexualized that they may have simply projected their sexual needs onto everybody and everything, not simply helpless children. The children may be those who were most easily manipulated to satisfy the preoccupations.

In addition to the Early Sexualizers, there is a small subgroup (two or three men) whom we classified among the Sexually Preoccupied and who seem to manifest certain of the classical pedophile patterns. In their descriptions of their daughters, their arousal focused on certain clear marks of immaturity, such as hairlessness and smallness of features. They also reported an interest in children of a specific age range only.

Type 2: Adolescent Regressives

Another large group of men, about a third of the sample, had a sexual interest in their daughters that started around the time of puberty. These we have called the Adolescent Regressives.

These fathers were transfixed by the daughter's pubertal changes. They were particularly riveted by her breast development, which was the most common fixation, and also by her developing pubic hair and hips. Asked when they first began to think about molesting their daughter, they mentioned the changes of puberty without hesitation. Sometimes the onset was accentuated by a father's absence. When he came home, he was startled by the arousal he experienced when he noticed the changes in his daughter's body.

His awareness of the daughter's physical changes sometimes occurred quite early, before breast budding, but at a time when she began to act in more mature, less child-like ways. One father reported being intrigued with "her moves and the way she stood talking to friends."

But in any case, body characteristics and physical attractions were very prominent for this group. While some had allowed the arousal to build for years, including masturbating to fantasies of the daughter, before they actually acted on this interest, many acted with adolescent-like impulsivity.

These fathers, in fact, typically sounded like young adolescents, reliving the fascinations, preoccupations, and urges of their youth. They frequently were aware of the connection between their current fascination and their own adolescent years. One said, "they didn't build girls like that when I was thirteen." Another reported, "her age matched the busiest sexual time in my life."

They reported wanting to do the things with the daughter that they had wanted to do with peers during their adolescence: "I started to wonder what it would be like to touch her breasts and touch her between her legs and wondered how she would react if I did." Another described how "the father/adult [in him] shut down and I was like a kid again ... down to her level." In one case the father aptly described his regression to ploys typical of an adolescent to achieve sexual gratification. He stated that he used a nintendo game to bargain with his daughter to achieve sexual contact with her. He made a deal that if she lost the game he would get to touch her breasts. He doesn't remember what she would get if she won, because he never lost.

Sometimes the adolescent fascination these men had for their daughters became combined with a desperation which was extremely strong when they watched their daughters begin to date and be interested in boys.

Because it is a large group, there may be important subtypes to the Adolescent Regressives, but we were not yet able to delineate them clearly. Some of the Adolescent Regressives do appear to blend into certain of the characteristics of other types. A few Adolescent Regressives, for example, had histories of multiple sexual deviance that made them similar to the Sexually Preoccupied. Some were very angry with their wives and others were emotionally dependant on their daughter's attention and affection. It is also interesting that this group was least likely to report being under the influence of alcohol at the time of the sexual contact. We would hypothesize that due to the extent of their adolescent regression they did not require alcohol to reduce their inhibitions.

Type 3: Instrumental Sexual Gratifiers

While some men reported little specific sexual arousal to their daughters at the onset, for them sex was a primary goal. These are the Instrumental Sexual Gratifiers who comprise 20% of the sample and have some unique characteristics. In their accounts they did not mention erotic or sensual elements about their daughters, their bodies or their behaviors. They maintained that their primary fantasy or focus, even during sexual contacts with their daughters, was on some other partner, for example their wives, or an adult image, or sometimes even their daughter as an adult. Their abusive activity tended to be sporadic and the least frequent, which might lead some to question their truthfulness. Many of these men had rather strong feelings of guilt and remorse about their behavior, sometimes they were fully aware of the harm they had caused their daughter.

A kind of prototypical onset situation for this group was that they were masturbating or having strong sexual fantasies, when suddenly they noticed the presence or availability of the daughter. They then used the daughter's body as the object or receptacle with which to complete their sexual gratification, but without necessarily having experienced a sense of arousal to the child. They usually had not noticed beforehand any attraction or sexual interest in the daughter. Nor had they consciously tried to groom her.

> Several fathers said something to the effect of, "I was aroused and she was simply there." One described it as, "I wasn't thinking of her as a daughter; I thought of her as a sex object to be used for my own sexual needs." This father reported bathing with his 7 year old and becoming aroused when she rubbed against his penis. He suddenly realized he could "take advantage of the situation." He said "she wasn't a person to me."

Many times for this group the first sexual contact occurred while the father was bathing the child.

The men often had a proprietary air about their daughters that is consistent with their perception of her as an object to be used. One man said, "I was turned on and she was convenient. She was mine and I wasn't hurting her."

The daughter in these cases was frequently very young and thus easily manipulated into position for masturbation without objection because she had little idea of what was going on. In fact, the average age of onset for this group was comparable to that of the Early Sexualizers. The early sexualizers, however, reported that <u>arousal</u> began prior to the contact and at an earlier age. For the Instrumental Sexual Gratifiers, arousal was more likely to occur <u>after</u> the onset of the sexual contact.

The fact that they were abusing the daughter or that the daughter was so young was often a distracting element that these fathers had to work to ignore. Thus many of these fathers reported fantasizing about sex with adult women while they were molesting the daughter. One man said, "I abused her from behind so I wouldn't see her face." One other man described how he convinced himself that his daughter was also aroused so that he could molest

her while driving the guilt from his mind. They were aware of the inappropriateness of the activity, but had the ability to dissociate from this or screen it from their minds. After the incidents many were racked with guilt about what they were doing. This was in contrast with the Sexually Preoccupied or Adolescent Regressives who were strongly aroused by their daughter and felt little guilt. Sometimes, however, if the abuse was repeated over time, the Instrumental Sexual Gratifiers did develop some specific attraction or arousal to the daughter.

Type 4: Emotionally Dependent

For Emotionally Dependent abusers (comprising about one-tenth of the sample), sexual arousal was not primary, but for some it was present to some degree. The elements that these men stressed were the emotional needs that the daughters were fulfilling. Some of these men sounded extremely lonely and depressed and saw the daughter as their only option for comfort and closeness. Ninety percent of these men cited relationship problems when asked about the factors which contributed to the onset of the sexual contact with the daughter. Much of what these men described in regard to the relationship focused on feeling close to the child, getting comforted and feeling loved. They found the closeness and intimacy to be arousing. So their arousal was to the intimacy, not to the sexual characteristics. Although arousal preceded the sexual contact, it followed abusive intimacy with the daughter.

In this pattern, the fathers described a close, exclusive, emotionally dependent relationship with the daughter, to whom they turned for sexual gratification as part of an emotional fusion. They often described their relationships with the daughter in very positive terms, frequently of many years duration. A lot of their needs for intimacy and closeness were projected onto the daughters and these men exaggerated and idealized the degree of reciprocity in the relationship. Sex was not the central element, as it was in the three previous types, but sex seemed to be part of their misdirected search for complete intimacy with this partner.

> For example, one father rhapsodized that he was intent on loving his 5-year-old daughter like he should have been loved by his father. "I wanted to give her all the love and attention she needed...The closeness was very good and loving and (then) it turned sexual." He described how he was separated from his wife, seeing his daughter on weekends. "When she came over for the weekend, it became a relationship, it was companionship; I had been alone for six months. ... we slept together and would fondle each other. Then oral sex began."

> Another father described how he was "everything" to his daughter (because of her mother's absence), and how it happened that he and his daughter were hugging and sitting together on the couch when the hugging and caressing became "intimate feeling." His daughter was 4 years old.

While, on average, these daughters were very young at the time of the fathers' first sexual attraction to them (5.6 years; age of onset 6.9 years), this pattern may occur with daughters who are substantially older as well. Here the relationship took on a more adult romantic and sexual quality. In these cases, the father described his daughter as his "best friend" or in terms that might more normally be reserved for describing an adult lover.

This would seem to be a pattern similar to that one frequently sees among extra-familial pedophiles of the Lewis Carroll type, where adult men idealize and focus all their emotional and libidinal energies on a young child. These men generally were blocked in their ability to relate to adult women, felt like failures, alone and abandoned. They were completely unable to see that the child was not capable of fully reciprocating. But, their own needs were sufficiently infantile that they were met on some level by their daughter.

Type 5: Angry Retaliator

In Angry Retaliators (comprising approximately one-tenth of the sample), sexual arousal was, again, not primary. There was relatively little focus on arousal or the sexual characteristics of the child. The primary emotion that these men described was anger, sometimes at the child, but usually at the wife for neglect, abandonment, or actual or presumed infidelity. The sexual contact with the daughter was a way of retaliating against the wife, and also secondarily, of seeking some comfort in a compensatory alliance.

These fathers did not express strong sexual interest in the daughter herself. If the daughter was very young, they tended to deny any arousal at any time. If the daughter was pubescent, they sometimes made some mention of it, but it was not the predominant element and did not hold the fascination that it did for the Adolescent Regressives.

> For example, one man told us, "My daughter had no sex appeal for me that I can remember. It was more a feeling of aggression. What I did was just an opportunity to get back at my daughter for being the center of my wife's life. My wife had previously lost a child and I felt that she had my daughter now and there was no room for me ... I felt I had been kicked out of the relationship. I was separated from my wife for three or four months and was seeing my 3-year-old daughter twice a week. I was at my wife's place to see my daughter and have dinner. I put my daughter down for a nap but she wouldn't go to sleep. I was in and out of her room. The last time in the room I knelt by the bed and began tickling her sides. She kicked the covers off and I noticed she didn't have on any underwear. I placed my mouth on her vagina. She pushed me away and I left the room. After 20 minutes I went back in and told her she could get up. She then told her mother what I had done.

The daughters in these instances were not described in the rapturous and romantic terms of the romantic idealizers. Frequently there was little awareness of the daughter at all. The child was selected only as a target

for the expression of anger. She may in fact have been identified more with the wife than the father (e.g., because of similarity of looks, or closeness between the wife and the daughter), and the abuse was a way of defying the wife or defiling something of value to her. Sex was seen as a way to desecrate the daughter or was taken in an angry sense of entitlement.

One important subtype of Angry Retaliators was the Sadist. There were a few men who fell into this subtype. They were characterized by their infliction of pain or degradation on the child in addition to sexual activities. The abuse that they perpetrated included large amounts of violence and physical force, tying up, gagging, and beating. The men described how they "raped" their daughters and were physically aroused by the violence.

The next figure (4-4) illustrates some important contrasts among the five types we have discussed here. When we compare the proportion who reported sexual interest in the daughter prior to the abuse for each type, the sexually preoccupied and adolescent regressive fathers were most likely to have reported sexual interest prior to the actual contact. The instrumental self-gratifiers were least likely to report such an interest. While we have suggested that the emotionally dependant fathers were not motivated primarily by sexual interest, their sexual interest was aroused by the intimacy of the relationship they developed with the daughter and, as Figure 4-5 illustrates, frequently preceded the actual overt sexual contact.

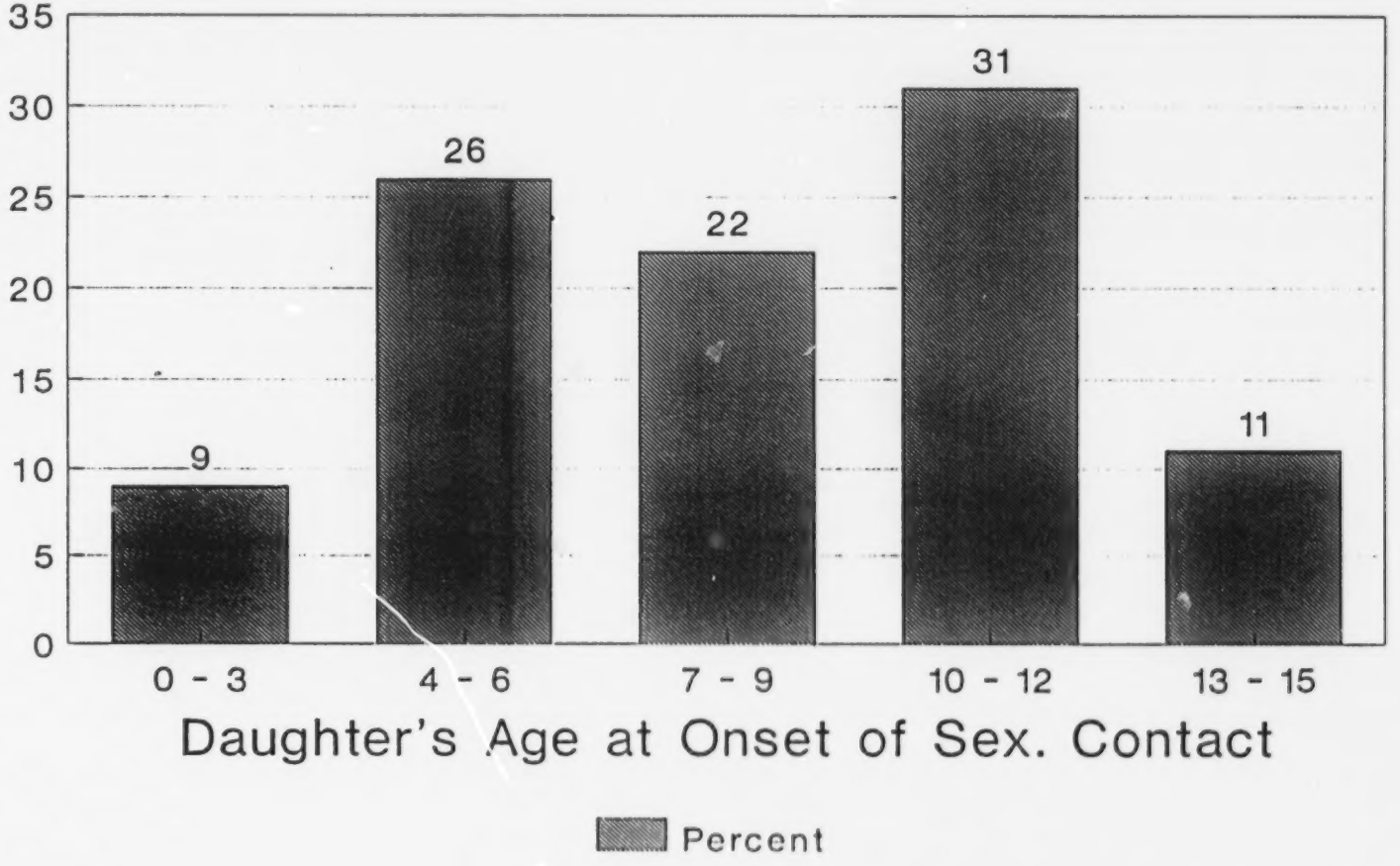
Figure 4-5 reveals that, for the sexually preoccupied and emotionally dependant groups, more time elapsed between the initial sexual arousal to the daughter and actual sexual contact. Both of these types were more likely to target daughters at an earlier age.

The five types we have described here are probably not an exhaustive inventory. Moreover, some fathers seem to combine elements of two or more of these types. But each of the types does describe a kind of distinct component of the onset process that we identified in a group of men where it was quite pronounced.

It is clear that incestuous fathers cannot be described as a monolithic group. Interestingly, the group of incestuous fathers which most closely approximates common stereotypes (the emotionally dependant, passive father) is one of the smaller groups. These men are probably the most likely to be found in community treatment programs and thus much of the clinical literature has focused on them. This study suggests the need to broaden our understanding of incestuous perpetrators.

We will be testing and refining this typology as we analyze more of the data from the study. These classifications also have implications for intervention strategies which will be discussed in later reports.

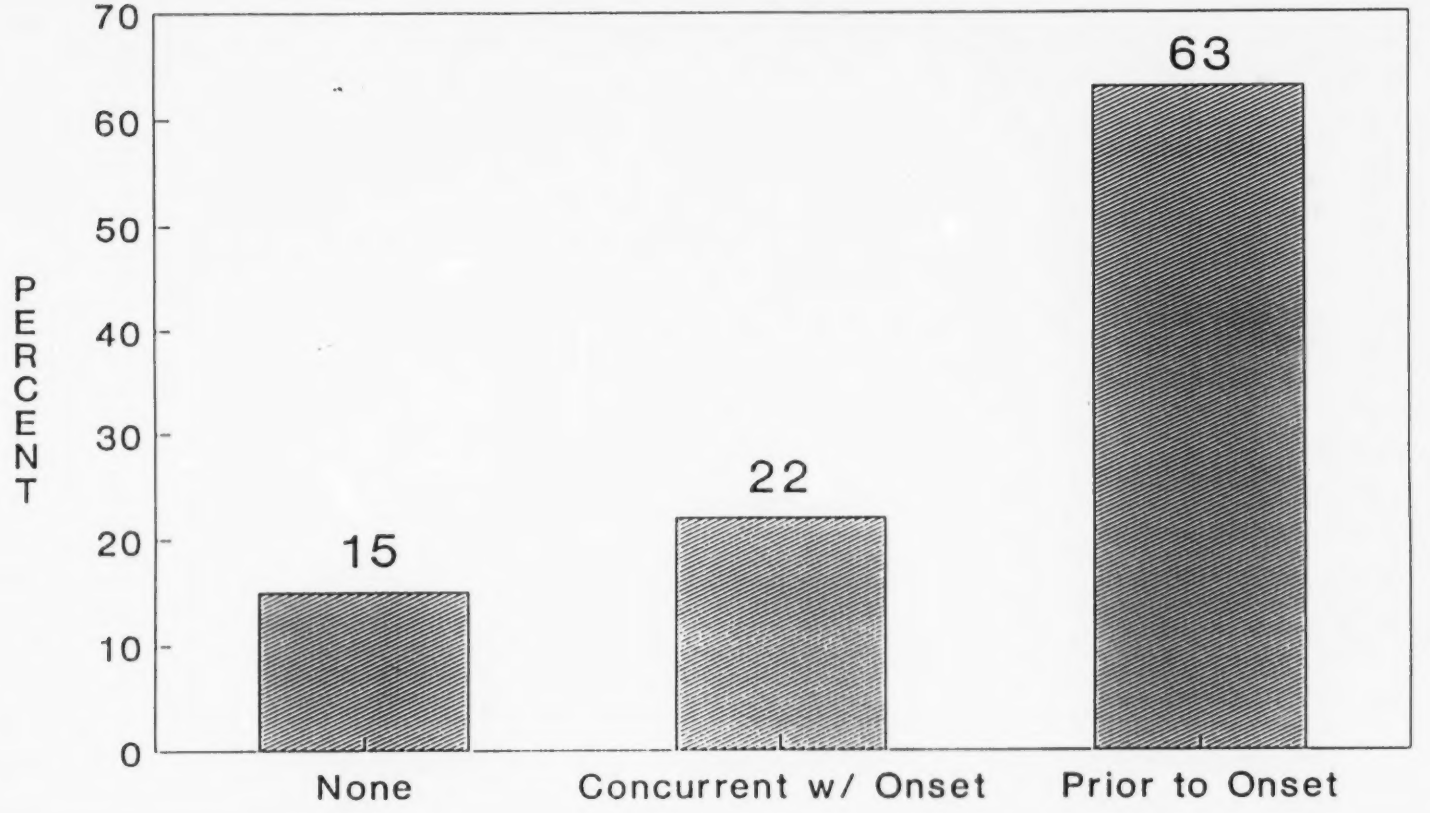
FIGURE 4-1



Williams & Finkelhor, 1991

Reported Sexual Interest in Daughter (Proportion of Fathers) (N=89)

FIGURE 4-2



(Williams & Finkelhor, 1991)

Precursors to Sexual Contact with Daughter

Masturbated to Fantasy of Daughter	15%
Exhibited Self to Daughter	7%
Groomed Daughter	12%

Williams & Finkelhor (1991)

TABLE 4-1

TABLE 4-2

Onset Stimuli Mentioned: Activities with Daughter

Hug, Kiss, Hold, etc.	27%
See Her Naked	25%
Responding to Her Curiosity About Sex	14%
Sleeping in Same Bed	11%
Bathing with Her	10%
Seeing Her in Tub, Bathing Her	10%
Wrestling	9%
Taking Care of or Examining Her	9%
Watching TV	8%
Touching Accidentally	5%
She Massaging Him	5%
She Seeing Him in Sex Act	5%
Putting Her to Bed	4%
Sex Education Talk	4%

Williams & Finkelhor (1991)

TABLE 4-3

Onset Stimuli Mentioned: Daughter Characteristics

Bodily Attribute, Softness, Smell	37%
Her Physical Shape or Size	29%
Pubertal Changes	23%
Breasts	20%
Genitals	19%
Affectionate Nature	14%
Her Sexual Activities with Others	9%

Williams & Finkelhor (1991) 53

TABLE 4-4

Onset Stimuli Mentioned: Other

Wife's Contribution		43%
Sex/Emotional needs not met	14%	
Rejection/Affair	10%	
Working/Busy	9%	
His anger toward her	5%	
Her emotional problems	4%	
Psychological Problems		22%
Alcohol or Drug Use/Abuse		9%
Work Problems		8%

Williams & Finkelhor (1991)

54

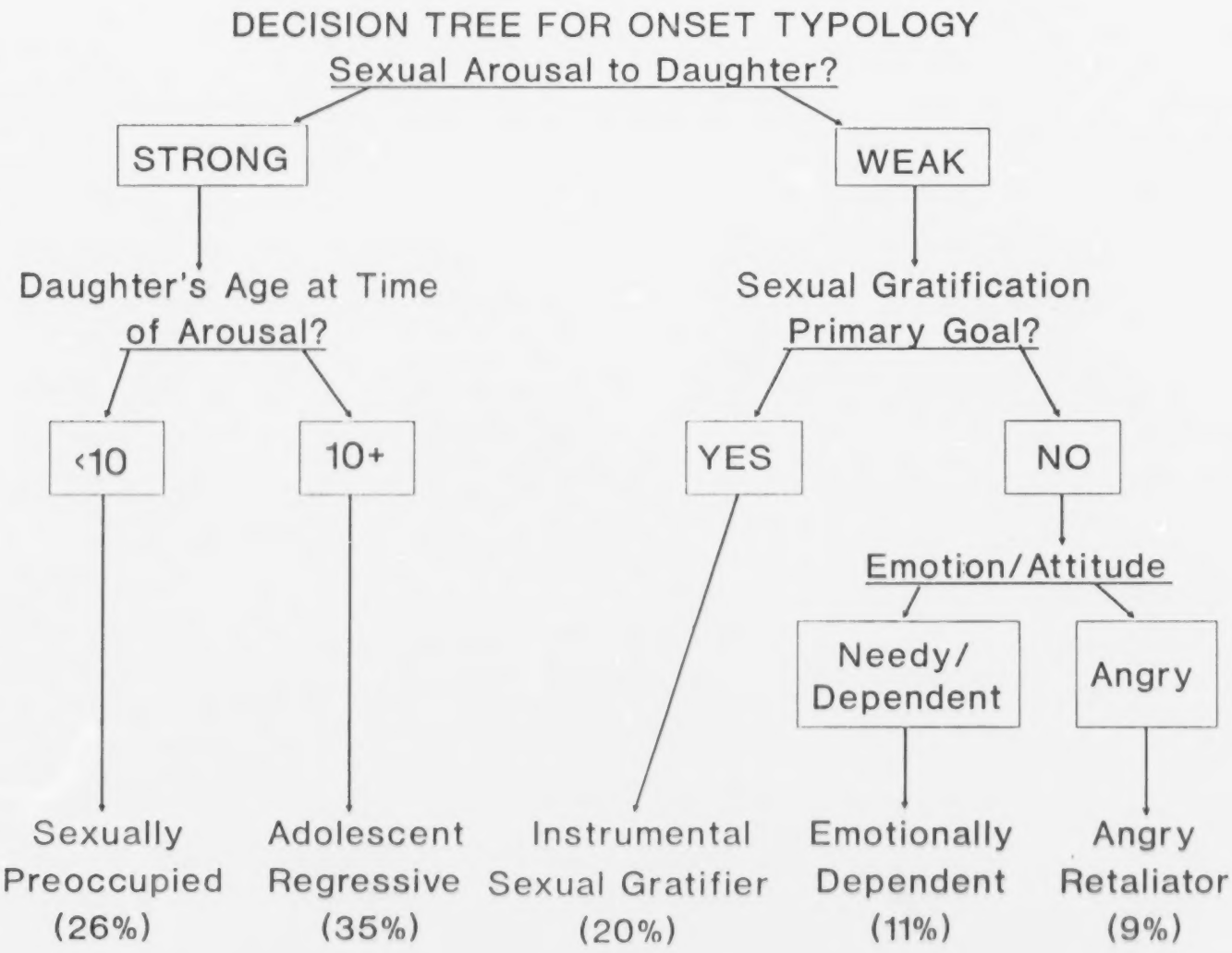
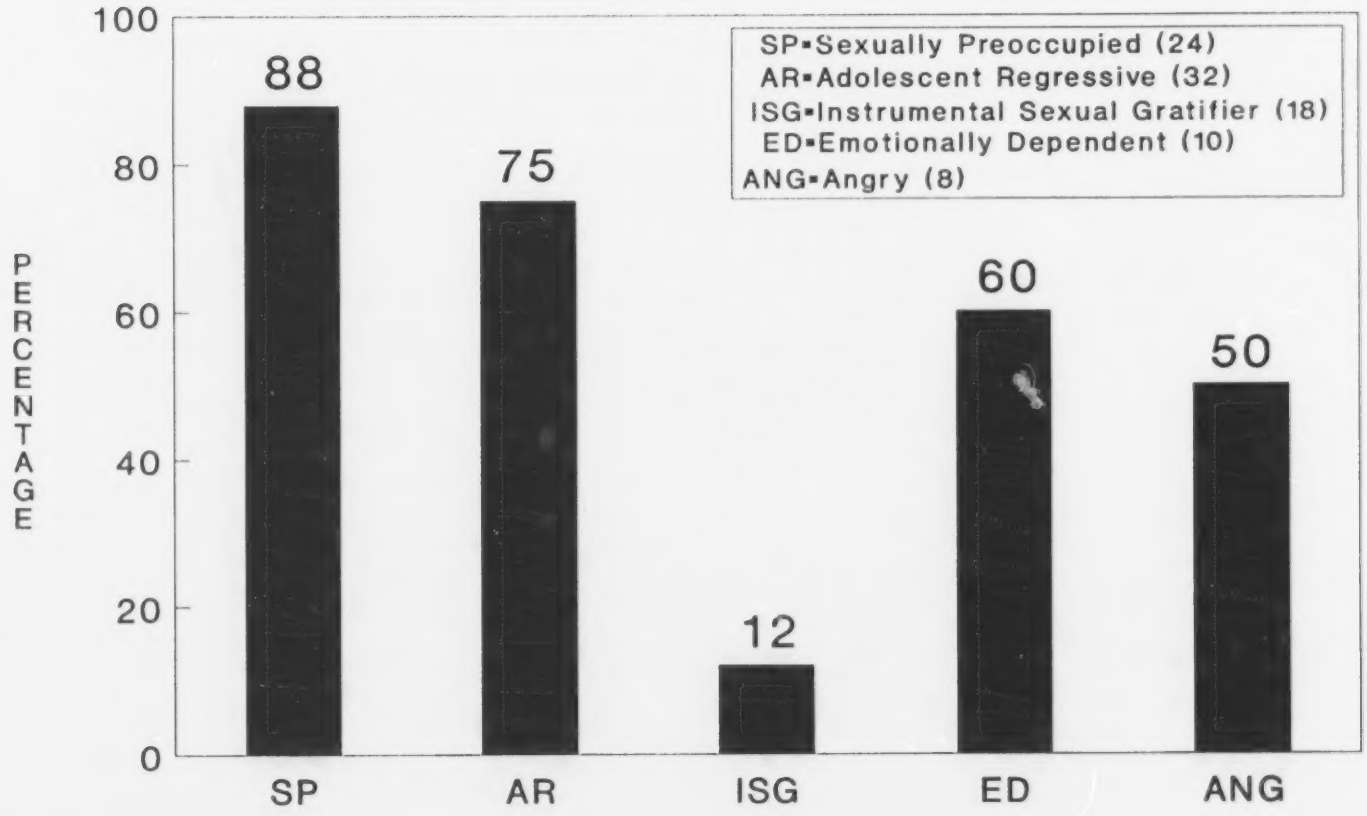

DECISION TREE FOR ONSET TYPOLOGY
Sexual Arousal to Daughter?
STRONG
WEAK
Daughter's Age at Time of Arousal?
Sexual Gratification Primary Goal?
<10
10+
YES
NO
Emotion/Attitude
Needy/ Dependent
Angry
Sexually Preoccupied (26%)
Adolescent Regressive (35%)
Instrumental Sexual Gratifier (20%)
Emotionally Dependent (11%)
Angry Retaliator (9%)

FIGURE 4-3

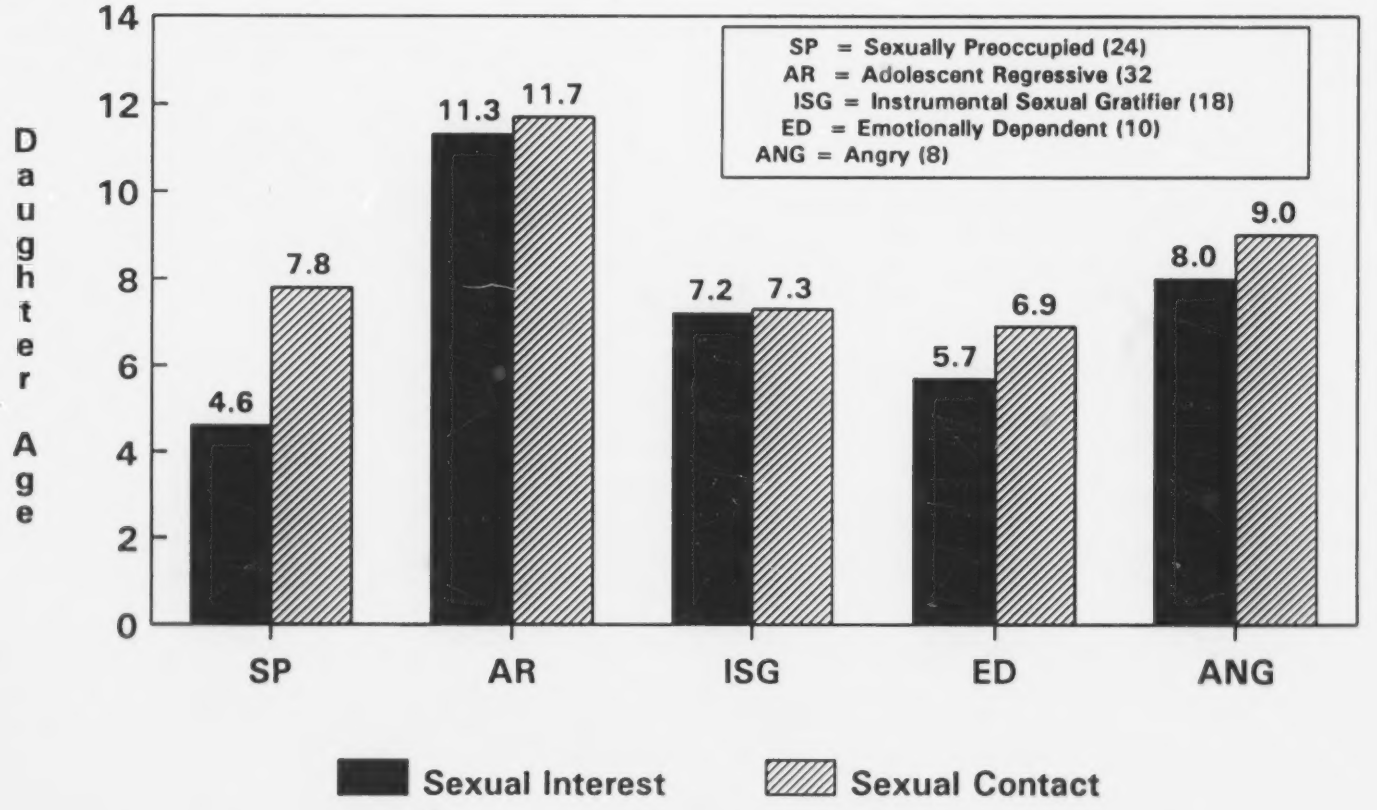
Incestuous Fathers' Reports of Sexual Interest Prior to Abuse (Percentages)

FIGURE 4-4



(Williams & Finkelhor, 1991)

Age of Daughter at Time of Fathers' First Sexual Interest and Sexual Contact



$p < .05$ (ANOVA)

(Williams & Finkelhor, 1991)

FIGURE 4-5

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Chapter 5: FATHER'S INVOLVEMENT IN CAREGIVING: A TEST OF A BIOSOCIAL MODEL

In recent years, a growing number of scholars endorsed the idea that in humans, as in other species, innate biosocial mechanisms inhibit incest (Shepher, 1983; van den Berghe, 1983). When Westermarck first expounded this theory 100 years ago, he postulated "an innate aversion to sexual intercourse between persons living very closely together from early youth" (1891, p. 321). Discredited and ignored for many years, the theory has recently been rejuvenated and elaborated with a variety of new theory and research (Thornhill, 1991).

A number of premises form the basis of the argument for biosocial mechanisms that inhibit incest. The major premise is that close inbreeding can have serious deleterious effects on human populations (Adams & Neel, 1967), such that an innate avoidance mechanism would confer important adaptive evolutionary advantages (van den Berghe, 1983).

A variety of sources, including many animal studies (Bixler, 1981; Bischof, 1975, Shepher, 1983), provide empirical evidence to support the existence of such a mechanism. In human populations, the most widely cited evidence for the presence of an innate mechanism that operates independently of cultural norms is the works of Shepher (1971) and Wolf (1968; 1970). Shepher studied the unrelated children raised in sibling-like conditions in Israeli kibbutz nurseries and reported that they almost never married or had sex with each other, even though there were no social taboos on such relationships. Wolf studied children raised together in Taiwanese households under conditions of the *simpua* marriage--in which a prospective bride was brought into the bridegroom's house as a child to be raised with her betrothed almost like a sibling. When grown, the children strongly resisted consummating these marriages and experienced a high rate of marital failure.

Various biosocial mechanisms--mechanisms that have an innate biological substratum although potentiated by experiences in the social environment--have been proposed to explain this apparent aversion to sex among those raised in close proximity. For example, Shepher (1983) believes that intense tactile interactions before age six trigger a "negative imprinting" that potentiates a sexual aversion that then becomes conscious around age 14 or 15. Fox (1980) thinks that children's early sex play results in painful frustration -- arousal without orgasmic relief -- that lingers as a negative association toward the sibling and interferes with sexual interest. Demerest (1983) sees the mechanism simply as a case of "habituation," whereby a familiar stimulus becomes less interesting or exciting due to frequent contact. No empirical evidence has been provided for any of these highly speculative mechanisms.

Although the "biosocial" theory has primarily been applied to sibling incest avoidance, in recent years a number of scholars have applied it to the case of father-daughter incest as well (Parker & Parker, 1986; Shepher, 1983; van den Berghe, 1983). Among other interesting findings, epidemiological studies (Russell, 1986; NCCAN, 1981) show dramatically higher rates of such abuse by stepfathers than by biological fathers, a conclusion consistent with the biosocial thesis that early contact potentiates an avoidance mechanism.

Parker and Parker (1986) have done the most to develop the biosocial thesis in regard to father-daughter incest. They postulated that close

involvement by fathers in the early care of daughters decreases the likelihood of any later sexual interest. They hypothesize a habituation-type mechanism to explain this; i.e., that because sexual arousal is stimulated by novelty and discouraged by familiarity, an involved father would be too familiar with the daughter to find her sexually arousing. In support of this thesis, they compared 56 incestuous fathers and stepfathers to 54 control fathers matched on age. They found that the incestuous fathers were significantly less likely than the matched sample of other fathers to have been in the home or involved in early child-care activities in the child's first three years of life. But certain problems undermine the Parker and Parker study. Most important, the study did not test some possible spurious relationships which may explain the findings. For example, certain childhood experiences or personality traits of the men might have accounted for both their non-involvement with the daughter and the incest. There were also problems with the adequacy of the matching procedures in selecting the comparison group of non-incestuous fathers.

Not surprisingly, these theories have been controversial and have elicited substantial criticism (Livingstone, 1983, 1991). In a recent article (Leavitt, 1990) and in commentary on Thornhill's (1991) evolutionary analyses (Leavitt, 1991; Livingstone, 1991), the major problems with the evidence are outlined. Among other matters, it is not clear that any true adaptive advantage would have been conferred to early human populations by the hypothesized incest avoidance mechanism. In regard to the kibbutz findings, other observers note that, especially since the sexual revolution of the 1960s, there is substantial adolescent and adult sexual activity among children raised together in kibbutzim (Kaffman, 1977). Moreover, critics have pointed out that many other possible, non-biological reasons could readily explain whatever sexual avoidance was noted both among kibbutz children and in the *simpua* marriages.

In spite of such criticisms, the theory enjoys a certain appeal. Part of the reason for its appeal may be that it seems to account for many people's subject experience: the sexual aversion they feel toward close relatives.

The theory, if correct, could have substantial significance for social policy concerning families. According to some estimates, father-daughter sexual abuse may occur to as many as 1-in-20 women (Russell, 1986) and exacts a substantial psychological toll on the victims both in the short and long-term (Herman, 1981; Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, in press; Beitchman, et al., 1992). If greater paternal involvement during the early years of life could markedly reduce the incidence of sexual abuse, this could form the basis of a movement to convince governments and businesses to promote actively such involvement.

Methodology for testing the biosocial thesis

The current study compared paternal involvement for the U.S. Navy and civilian incestuous fathers with a closely matched group of control fathers. It was designed as a much tighter test of the paternal involvement hypothesis than the Parker and Parker study. First, we limited subjects to biological fathers because this is a group where the expectation of protection is obviously the strongest. But this would also provide the clearest test of

any "caregiving prevents incest" hypothesis. All these men had at least in theory the possibility of caring for their children from their earliest age. Stepfather status--which has a number of other relevant attributes, such as weaker norms against sexual contact--is highly correlated with absence and introduces a possible confounding variable in mixed father and stepfather samples. Confining the sample to biological fathers provides a purer test of the biosocial thesis.

Second, we designed the study to control for the problems introduced when paternal absences are voluntary. An alternative explanation for the Parker and Parker findings that poses a serious problem in interpreting their results is that men from troubled backgrounds who are more likely to commit incest may also be men who do not want to be around their young children, so they make themselves scarce. This creates the possibility of a spurious relationship. In the navy, however, men are frequently absent from their home, not due to self-selected lack of interest, but due to deployments, absences that are assigned and largely outside of their control. Therefore, as an almost randomly assigned kind of paternal absence, it makes an excellent environment for studying the relationship between paternal absence or non-involvement and incest.

The navy connection also helped us enormously in the problem of selecting a well-matched comparison sample that minimized volunteer bias. A big problem in case control studies like this is that frequently the controls are volunteers from ads or from other noncomparable groups, where the volunteers are people eager to talk about their families because they are so involved in and positive about them. With the navy, however, we used their computerized records to select other men in the navy who matched the incestuous fathers on age, year of entry into the navy, rank and the age of their daughter. Then we got a list of matches and recruited from them. For the civilians, we located controls via random-dialed telephone solicitation in several states. These fathers were matched on age, education, occupation and age of the daughter.

There was one other merit to our recruitment from the navy. The sample may be, in some ways, more representative of incestuous fathers (at least, those whose abuse is disclosed) than are samples of incestuous fathers solicited solely from civilian treatment programs. All disclosed cases of incestuous abuse by U.S. Navy personnel are reported to the Navy Family Support Program and all biological fathers involved in these cases were asked to participate in the study. This means we had greater access to the whole universe of offenders in this population. Only one navy man was incarcerated, while about one-third of the civilian fathers were. (In the Parker and Parker study, 45% of the incest fathers they studied were incarcerated or hospitalized.)

Our review of the literature on incestuous fathers (Williams & Finkelhor, 1990) and the study conducted by Parker and Parker (1986) guided our choice of variables for this analysis. We included two dimensions relevant to the biosocial thesis: a measure of the proportion of time the father was absent from his daughter, and a measure of his involvement in care of his daughter that required bodily contact and intimate familiarity. We also included a number of variables that might be responsible for a spurious connection between paternal involvement and incest. For example, emotionally unstable or less empathic men may be less likely to get involved in the

daughter's care and more likely to incestuously abuse a child. There was also extensive evidence that child molesters are more likely than nonabusers to have a history of childhood physical and sexual victimization and even more likely to have suffered psychological abuse and parental neglect (Williams & Finkelhor, 1990). Because incestuous behavior in adulthood may also be an extension of sexual preoccupation or deviance which began in youth, we also included the commission, prior to age 18, of sexual abuse against a child or an adult.

Findings

Severe abuse by the subject's father (or mother): Severe abuse was measured with a modified version of the conflict tactics scale (Straus, 1990) and included any of the following acts committed by the parent: locked him in a closet or tied him up; kicked him; hit him with a fist; threatened him with a knife or gun; burned him; hit him with an object 12 or more times in any year; administered punishment which required medical attention. [The subject's father (or mother) was defined as his biological father (or mother) or the man (woman) with whom he lived for the longest time while he was growing up.]

The incestuous fathers report significant histories of child abuse. They were more likely than their non-incestuous counterparts to have experienced severe abuse by their own fathers (54% vs. 21%) and by their own mothers (37% vs. 14%). Men who were severely abused by their own fathers were more than four times as likely to become incestuous fathers than men who were not severely abused. Abuse by their own mothers more than tripled the odds of a man incestuously abusing a daughter.

Rejection/neglect by his father (mother): The measure of rejection or neglect by the father (mother) was derived from six items on the Clarke Parent-Child Relations Questionnaire (Paitich and Langevin, 1976) which elicits the subject's evaluation of relationships with his father (mother) when he was growing up. These items include the frequency of neglect, feeling close to (parent), receiving tenderness or affection, receiving attention, and being treated in a cold or reserved fashion. We reverse-scored this measure to represent paternal (or maternal) rejection on a scale of 0 to 12.

The incestuous fathers were more likely than comparison fathers to experience rejection/neglect by their own mothers (66% vs. 28%) and by their own fathers (28% vs. 18%). Rejection by mother and rejection by father each increased the odds of being an incest father more than five times.

Child sexual victimization: A series of 14 questions about sexual experiences adapted from Russell (1986) elicited information on child sexual victimization. Child sexual victimization included only sexual contact which happened before the subject was 18 years of age and involved force or misuse of a position of authority or a perpetrator who was five or more years older than the subject.

Sexual victimization occurred during the childhood of 72% of the incestuous fathers compared to 32% of the non-incestuous fathers. Both navy

incestuous fathers (64%) and civilian incestuous fathers (79%) were more likely to report sexual victimization than the comparison fathers were (21% navy and 41% civilian). Fathers who were sexually abused during their own childhoods were more than four times as likely as non-abused fathers to incestuously abuse a daughter.

Sex offenses as a youth: In the context of discussing sexual experiences as a child, we asked the fathers a series of seven questions about experiences they may have initiated with others. Initiation of sex offenses during youth was defined as any sexual contact initiated by the subject before he was 18 years of age that involved force or misuse of a position of authority or involved a child who was five or more years younger than he.

Incestuous fathers were more likely during their own youth or teenage years to have initiated sexual abuse of a child or rape of an adult than were non-incestuous fathers (33% vs. 9%). Men who initiated sexual abuse in their youths were nearly six times more likely to become incestuous fathers.

Low empathy/high emotional instability: Seven items formed our empathy scale including items such as: "I don't blame anyone for taking advantage of someone who allows it" and "I get very irritated if someone demands that I do things his way rather than my own." The emotional instability measure is from the Cattell, et al. (1969) 16 personality factor (16 PF) questionnaire.

Low empathy scores were not associated with incestuous behaviors by the fathers in our sample. While men who were emotionally unstable were more likely to be incestuous fathers, the crude odds ratio was not statistically significant.

Paternal involvement: Our measures of paternal absence were the proportion of time the father was separated from his daughter during (1) the first 12 months of her life, (2) the first two years, (3) the first three years, and (4) the first four years.[1] Only absences of 30 or more consecutive days were counted.

There was no difference in the proportion of time incestuous and non-incestuous fathers were separated from the daughter when she was young. In the first year of the daughter's life, on average, incestuous and non-incestuous fathers spent 12% of the time away from the daughter. The proportion of time separated from the daughter was greater for the navy sample, but there was no significant difference between the incestuous fathers (19%) and non-incestuous comparison fathers (23%). The proportion of time separated from the daughter was no different for incestuous and non-incestuous fathers at any time during the daughter's first four years of life. Figure 5-1 shows that while the navy men were more absent than the group as a whole, absences made no difference in terms of the amount of incest. The incestuous fathers were not absent any more frequently than the control men.

To measure caretaking, we constructed our own 55-item "fathering activities questionnaire," which covered several time periods: the daughter's

first 12 months of life, 13 months through 3 years of age, 4 and 5 years of age, and then ages 6 through 9. The fathers rated themselves on how frequently they engaged in a list of caregiving activities. These included both intimate care items such as cutting the daughter's toe and finger nails, bathing the daughter, dressing her, and changing her diapers or toilet training her, and also more general care items such as feeding, playing with her, reading to her, helping her with homework, and taking her on outings.

More consistent with the biosocial thesis, the incestuous fathers did report less involvement in the care of the daughter in her first year of life and during each time period studied. Overall, the incestuous fathers had lower caretaking scores than the control fathers. Figure 5-2 illustrates this relationship by comparing the proportion of incestuous and non-incestuous fathers who consistently had caregiving scores which placed them in the lower half of the sample during all three periods up through age five. (If the man had committed the incest before the daughter was 5, we included him in the low scoring group if he consistently was in the low half prior to onset.) Among the incestuous fathers, 43% were in this low care group whereas among the controls only 24% fell into this group. The difference was even greater among the navy fathers: among incestuous fathers 43% were in the low care group, but only 16% of the comparison fathers fell into this group (recall that the navy comparison sample included fewer fathers now in prison). In total, there was a nearly a three times greater risk of incest among low caretakers.

However, it is possible that this relationship is a spurious one. For example, it may be that men who were mistreated by their own fathers were poor caretakers and at higher risk for incest because of their abuse, not because of their caretaking history. Similarly, men who had themselves been sexually abused might be poor caretakers and also at higher risk. Also, men who were simply not empathetic or who were emotionally unstable might be both poorer caretakers and also men more likely to commit incest. The incestuous abuse, thus, might not have anything directly to do with their caretaking.

We thus subjected the data to multivariate analyses (logistic regression analyses) to determine if the relationship between caretaking and incestuous abuse of the daughter remained when we control statistically for some of these other possibly spurious connections.[2,3] Two logistic regressions were computed--one for all (matched) cases and one for navy (matched) cases only. The results are given in Table 5-1 and are reflected in the adjusted odds ratios for the variables.

The crude odds ratio shows what the simple relationship was between this variable and incest. For example, men who were sexually victimized were 5.6 times more likely to incestuously abuse a daughter than those who were not victimized. The adjusted odds ratio shows the relationship to incestuous abuse of the daughter when all the other variables were controlled. Thus controlling for the other variables, a man who was sexually abused was 2.44 times more likely to incestuously abuse his daughter.

In the full sample a man who was a low caregiver was 2.37 times more likely to be an incestuous father, and when the other variables were controlled the odds ratio increased to 3.61. This suggests not only that the relationship between caregiving and incestuous abuse is not spurious, but that the relationship actually got stronger when we controlled for the other

variables such as abuse by father and mother, rejection by parents, sexual victimization, whether the man committed juvenile sex offenses, whether he was low in empathy, emotionally unstable or had a lower level of education.

This table also suggests that there are a number of important risk factors and contributors to becoming an incestuous father, not just caregiving. Some of these are quite expected. Men who were sexually abused were at a two to three times higher risk for incestuous abuse of the daughter. Interestingly, though, other forms of child abuse were even more potent contributors than sexual abuse. For example, in the full sample, severe physical abuse by the man's own father was a very important risk factor. In both samples the man's childhood experiences of rejection by his mother was an important risk factor. Navy men who experienced maternal rejection were, however, over nine times as likely as men who were not rejected to incestuously abuse a daughter. There is a high likelihood that many of these men were raised in navy families (we did not collect data on this) in which the role of his mother was magnified due to his father's frequent deployments.

Being the perpetrator of a youthful sex offense, not surprisingly, also is highly predictive of becoming an incestuous father.

Perhaps most surprising, being a sole caregiver -- that is, when a father took responsibility for his daughter by himself for some period of time (of at least 30 days duration) -- increased the risk of later incestuous abuse. This suggests that sole caretaking (unlike high involvement in caregiving) is <u>not</u> protective against incest.

The result of the multivariate analysis, therefore, suggests that caretaking is related to incest, even when controlling for a variety of other possible spurious connections.

Discussion

Our findings confirm that when fathers are actually actively involved in the care of the daughter, they appear to be at a lower risk for incest--consistent with the biosocial hypothesis. This relationship persists even when we control for a variety of other factors. As we have seen, being mistreated by his own parents does not explain both the father's incest and the low caretaking. Being deficient in empathy also does not explain the relationship. Emotional instability, marital conflict and negative prenatal attitudes toward the child are also not intermediaries. Although it is possible that other unmeasured mediating or confounding factors are at work, these findings lend support to the idea that caretaking activities themselves may confer some protection against later child sexual abuse. A prospective experimental design is necessary to test this proposition.

If caretaking does confer some protection as our data indicate, why does this work? Do we have evidence to support the biosocial thesis? While the general biosocial prediction is supported by this study's findings, the theory's mechanisms are not. Parker and Parker (1986) have suggested that caretaking inhibits incest by depressing sexual arousal and interest through the process of "habituation." Thus, frequent exposure to and contact with the child's body and even the sight of the child's genitals should be the

most habituating and therefore most inhibiting of sexual contact. Similar implications follow from Shepher's (1983) biosocial theory that tactile interactions trigger a kind of negative imprinting that inhibits incest. This is similar to the notion that when an adult diapers, cleans and feeds a young child, it sets up associations to the child's body that are antagonistic to sexual arousal.

But contrary to these predictions we found that bodily caretaking--the kind of activity that places the adult in closest physical contact with the child--diapering, bathing and dressing, was not the type of caretaking that most inhibits incest. Table 5-2 illustrates that the items in our caretaking scale that measured bodily contact--feeding, diapering, bathing and dressing --were not consistently stronger in their association to incest. In fact, general, non-bodily caretaking activities--like reading stories and watching the child play--especially with children age 4 and 5, were more strongly inhibitory than bodily contact. This may suggest some other mechanisms than the ones proposed in the biosocial thesis.

Another concept utilized in the biosocial theories about incest avoidance is the so-called "critical period." Shepher (1983), in particular, argues that it is only <u>early</u> tactile contact that inhibits incest, and Parker and Parker in their work have also implied the primacy of caregiving during the first three years. This notion of a critical period derives from ethological observation that a variety of important parent-child connections get established early in life.

In the current study, however, we found no evidence of a critical period in the first three years. The inhibitory effect of caretaking in the first year of life, for example, did not appear particularly strong. In fact, fathers giving little care in the first year could still benefit from a reduction in risk if they were high in caretaking at a later time. The strongest association appeared to be for caretaking at ages 4 and 5, after which the effect seemed to diminish, although the reduction in sample size (as men who began sexual contact with the daughter were necessarily excluded from the analysis) made the impact of later caregiving harder to estimate. This finding of a stronger effect of caregiving at ages 4 to 5 is probably the result of a confounding of the effect of involvement in care in the first year or two of the daughter's life with sexual interest in the daughter almost simultaneously with her birth. A small but important group of incestuous fathers were highly involved in caregiving in the very early years as part of grooming the daughter to accept sexual contact or because of their own fixation on her body. Once these very early abusers were eliminated from the analysis (as they were for the analysis of caretaking at age 4 and 5), the relationship strengthened. This suggests that caretaking before age 6 is more effective at inhibiting later than earlier sexual abuse.

One other implication of the biosocial thesis is that a biosocial inhibitory mechanism should have the capacity to strongly counteract other predispositions, to override the effects of an abusive childhood, for example. So, even men who were badly parented themselves would not sexually abuse the daughter, because, if they had been involved in early caretaking she would have no arousal value. These men might be terrible fathers in other ways, physically or emotionally abusive, but in the case of sexual abuse, early caregiving should override the effect of other predispositions.

In the current study, however, caregiving could not be said to have any such overriding effect. Incest occurred among 19% of the consistently highest caretaking fathers. Moreover, high levels of caretaking did nothing to dissolve the risk potential of other predisposing factors. Even among the highest caretakers, men with one or more other risk factors--like abuse by their father or a history of sexual victimization--had 19 times the risk of sexual abuse as other fathers. As is shown in Figure 5-3, even among the "high care" fathers, men with even only one other risk factor still had a high risk of sexual abuse (38%). For high caretakers with two or more other risk factors, 67% were incestuous fathers. If we compare the two sides of the figure, we can see that other predisposing factors increased the risk of abuse as fast or faster for the high caregivers as for others. So caretaking was hardly fail-safe.

The permeability of this hypothesized incest barrier is also suggested by some of the case histories. As we have mentioned, according to the accounts of some of the men, certain fathers engaged in high levels of caretaking as part of a "grooming" process in which they readied their daughters for sexual involvement. These men, already to some degree aware of their sexual interest, used intensive caretaking to create the conditions, such as time alone or an unusual degree of dependency or the acceptance of intimate physical touch, that would allow later sexual contact to occur and be tolerated. Clearly for this group, bent on sexual involvement, intensive caregiving had no inhibitory effect on sexual arousal and may in fact have facilitated the incest.

There is further evidence that caregiving involvement does not have its impact via a suppression of sexual interest. We conducted a separate analysis of the comparison fathers only. They were questioned about the sex education they provided to the daughter and then asked if they had ever experienced any sexual arousal to or interest in the daughter. Eleven percent of the comparison fathers reported experiencing some sex interest in the daughter. A weak association between low involvement in care and sexual interest in the daughter at the bivariate level, drops out, however, in multivariate analysis. Severe abuse by the man's own father and his own history of being sexually abused as a child independently contribute to an increased likelihood of his sexual arousal to his daughter.

Because the expectations of the biosocial model are not supported in this research--particularly regarding intimate bodily contact inhibiting sexual arousal, our findings do not provide support for the theory as it has been articulated. Caregiving activities could, however, have inhibitory effects on incest through other mechanisms than the biosocial theorists have proposed.

The biosocial theory has focussed exclusively on the <u>inhibition</u> of <u>sexual</u> impulses, but it may be that we need a theory which emphasizes <u>enhancement</u> of parental impulses. Such a theory has support from the field of ethology, where it has been argued that in both animals and humans early interactions with children potentiate nurturing parental responses. It also has support from the developmental psychology literature, where research has shown that when they have gratifying interactions with children, adults become more effective parents.

There has not been a great deal of research on how caretaking affects parents. What literature there is focuses almost exclusively on mothers, ignoring the father. But a few studies show that when fathers do more caretaking, they become more responsive and sensitive to their children (Zelazo, Kotelchuck, Barber & David, 1977).

A variety of specific mechanisms related to enhanced parenting skills and impulses could explain how caretaking discourages incest. For example, when fathers take care of the child, this may evoke feelings of nurturance, protectiveness and identification with the child that deter them from acting on sexual feelings, because of the possible harm it might cause the child. We have evidence of this from our sample where we found (in another multivariate analysis) that the father's involvement in caregiving decreased the risk of violence toward his daughter (slapping and throwing things at her) even when we controlled for his own abuse history (the variable which made the greatest independent contribution to his violence toward her). This suggests that the impact of caregiving on abuse of the daughter (both sexual and physical abuse) is more generalized and may work by enhancing parenting skills and sensitivity to the impact of behaviors on the daughter.

The caretaking may have interactive effects as well. Greater involvement might enhance interpersonal communication and sensitivity between father and child, so the child might be more open about and effective in communicating her discomfort about some behaviors by the father, which in turn might deter a father's sexual advances or physical violence.

Caretaking may also inhibit incest by reinforcing alternative gratifications. For example, when they take greater care of children, men may actually learn how to get gratification and enjoyment from non-sexual contact with the child, something for which their ordinary socialization does not prepare them. When they have learned some of the intrinsic non-sexual enjoyments of caring for their children, it may undercut any inclinations toward sexualizing the child.

Although these are speculative ideas, it is entirely plausible that some such enhancement of parental attitudes and feelings may explain why father involvement lowers the risk of sexual abuse. Our research findings give just as much, if not more support, to such theory as to theory proposed thus far from the biosocial perspective.

Implications for Social Policy

Whatever the theory, however, the fact that greater caretaking reduces a father's risk of sexual abuse has many possible policy implications. Although there has always been strong evidence that fathers' participation in child care promotes child development, the connection to prevention of sexual abuse might be just the incentive needed by our society which has provided barriers to and few incentives for fathering. There are implications for policy regarding parental leave, job sharing, military deployments, flex time, office locations and business travel. We might want to greatly expand educational programs that promote fathers' involvement. Such programs, for example, based in hospitals during the post-partum period, have clearly demonstrated their capacity to enhance rates of paternal involvement (Parke, Hymel, Power & Tinsley, 1980).

However valuable as father involvement may be, we nonetheless have to urge extreme caution on those who may want to conclude from the current research that we have discovered a powerful remedy for incest. The findings of this and other research on this subject come with major caveats, which we need to review. One obvious caveat concerns the relatively modest strength of the findings. As we pointed out earlier, caretaking is not fail-safe protection. One-fifth of the highest caretaking fathers still committed incest. Among those with other risk factors, the rate was much higher. It would be a serious mistake to foist high risk fathers on children in the belief that it will protect them against incest. Any program which is designed to enhance father involvement would do best to assess for the presence of other risk factors, such as a history of childhood abuse, and attempt to mediate these.

We also must remind the reader of the associational nature of these findings. It may be that some unrecognized factor explains away the relationship demonstrated both here and in Parker and Parker's (1986) work. In that case, trying to enhance the involvement of men without recognizing and trying to affect this other factor could also be disastrous. Obviously, before it is recommended as policy, any theory of this sort needs to be subjected to experimental validation.

An obvious sign of caution--that we do not fully understand the complexity of the caretaking-incest problem--is evident in the seemingly paradoxical findings about sole caretakers. If caretaking yields such benefits, why do we have such a high risk among sole caretakers--the men who would presumably have the most caretaking opportunity?

In general, greater involvement may help reduce the risk for incest, but in some situations, for example when other predisposing factors exist--it may exacerbate the risk. This research suggests an important path for further inquiry. To understand offender etiology, it may be especially relevant to determine the role of involvement in caretaking in the etiology of incestuous abuse by women.

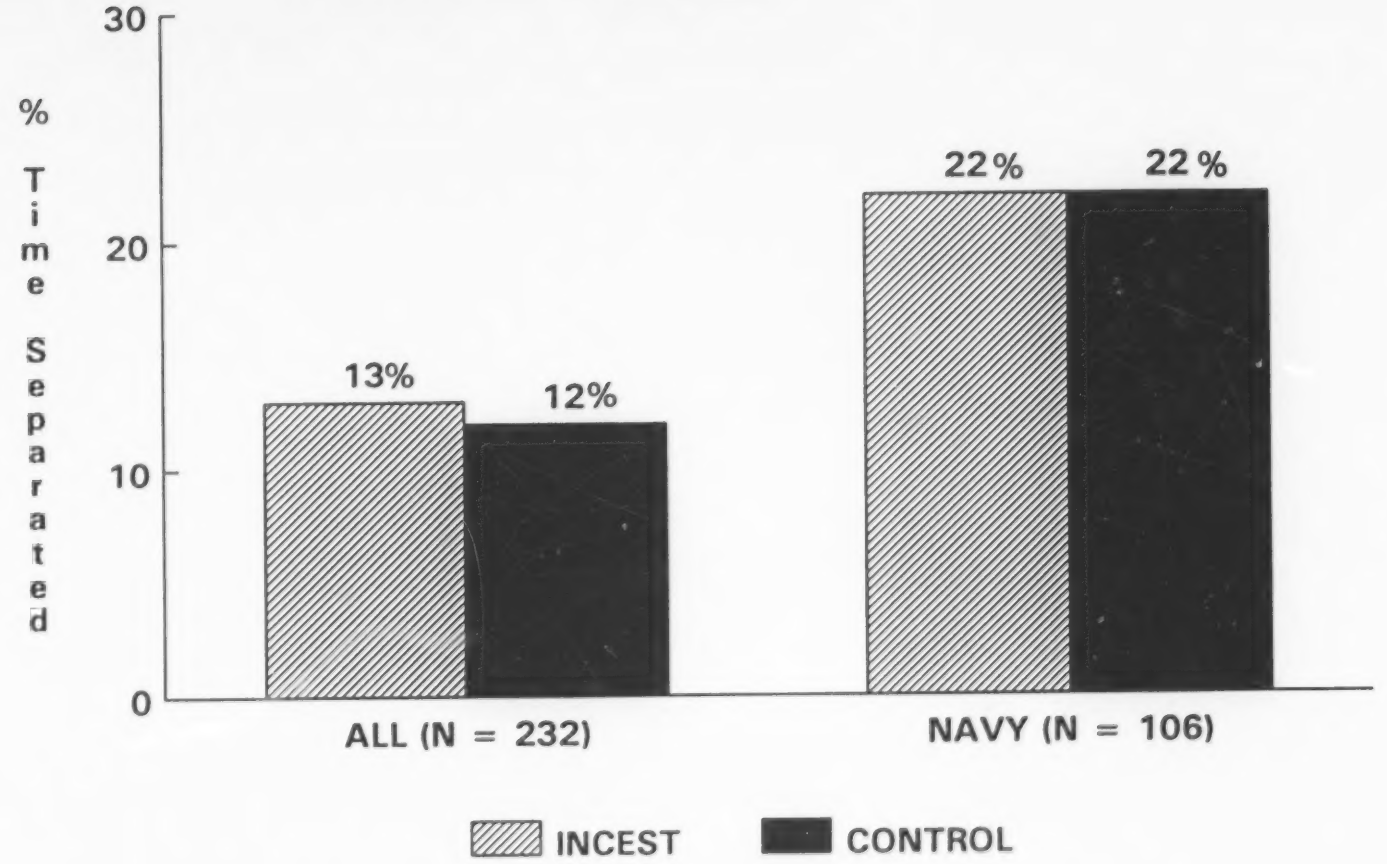
For those still interested in the existence of a biosocial inhibitory mechanism between fathers and daughters, obviously a prospective study of father-daughter relationships would be the next step. Such a study might overcome some of the limitations of the current one, such as its reliance on retrospective accounts of the fathers about their childcare activities. However, we are inclined to think that a biosocial theory of incest avoidance, if valid at all, has a stronger chance of confirmation among siblings, than between parents and children. Theorists and researchers should concentrate their attention there.

1. When the incestuous fathers began the sexual contact during the time period these men and their matches are omitted.

2. Because socioeconomic status has been associated with differential rates of paternal involvement in child care and child abuse, we included a measure of this variable (years of education) in the multivariate analyses. Because the civilian men were matched on years of education or occupation and the navy men were matched on rank, there were some differences between the incestuous fathers and non-incestuous fathers on this variable.

3. We also computed several additional logistic regression analyses in which we included the variables masturbation as a youth, number of parental changes during childhood, marital conflict, and sexualization of emotions. These variables did not contribute to the model.

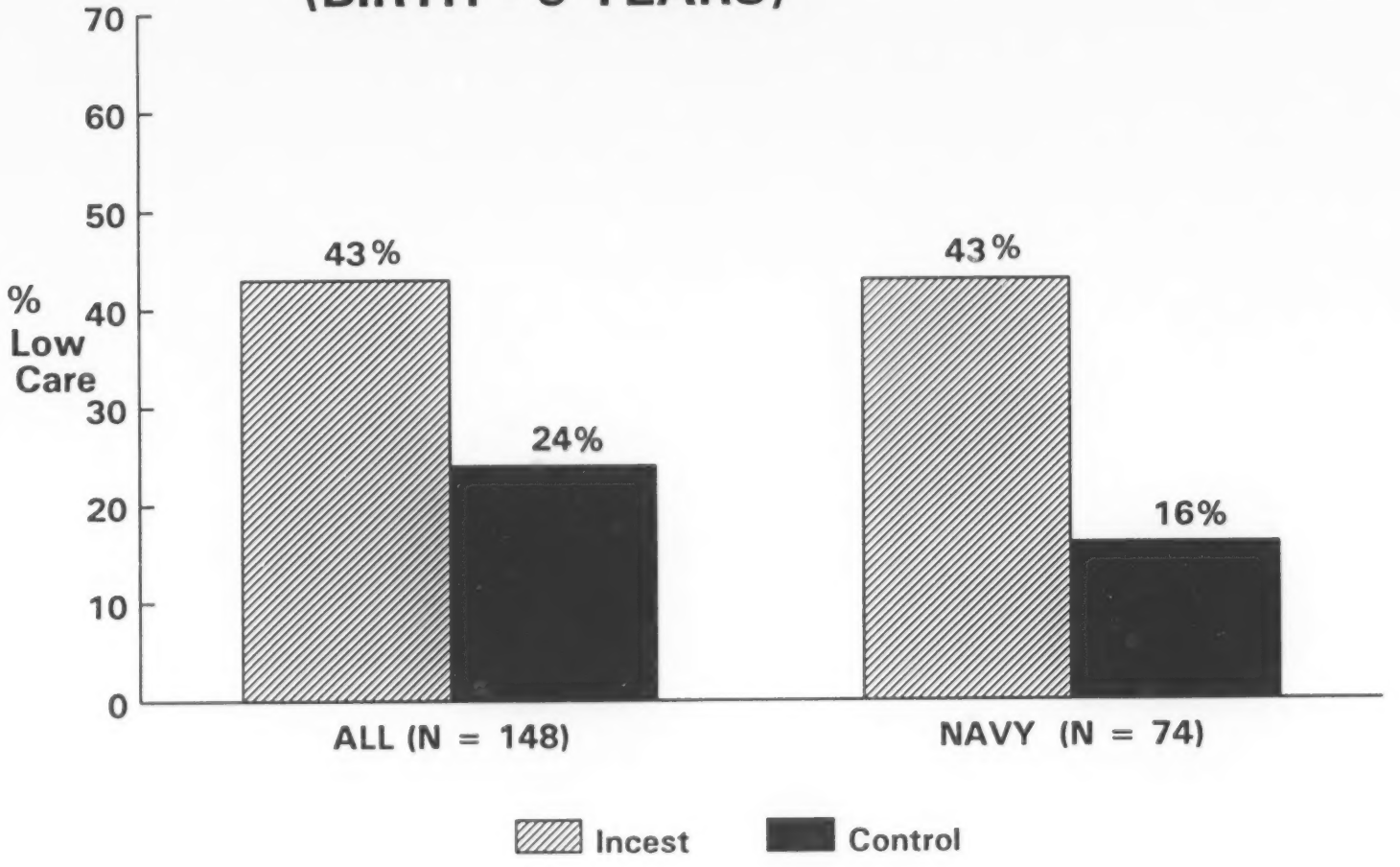
PATERNAL SEPARATIONS AND INCEST
(BIRTH - 4 YEARS)



(Williams & Finkelhor, 1992)

FIGURE 5-1

PATERNAL CARETAKING AND INCEST
(BIRTH - 5 YEARS)



(Williams & Finkelhor, 1992)

FIGURE 5-2

TABLE 5-1

RISK FACTORS FOR INCESTUOUS FATHERS: CRUDE AND ADJUSTED ODDS RATIOS

	ALL (N = 148)		NAVY (N = 74)	
	CRUDE	ADJUSTED	CRUDE	ADJUSTED
Separations, Year 1	.94	--	.80	--
Low Care, Age 0 - 5	2.37*	3.61*	3.94*	5.59+
Sole Caregiver before Onset	3.49**	5.56**	2.06	--
Severe Abuse by His Father	4.65***	4.58**	3.42*	--
Severe Abuse by His Mother	2.58*	--	1.00	--
Child Sexual Victimization	5.60***	2.44**	5.63**	3.61*
Rejection by His Father	4.79**	--	7.40*	
Rejection by His Mother	4.63***	2.16+	9.68***	9.23**
Youth Sex Offenders	4.79**	4.53*	3.64	--
Low Empathy	1.21	--	.79	--
Emotionally Unstable	1.85	--	2.73	--
Low Education	1.55	--	.72	--

+ = $p < .10$
* = $p < .05$
** = $p < .01$
*** = $p < .001$

TABLE 5-2

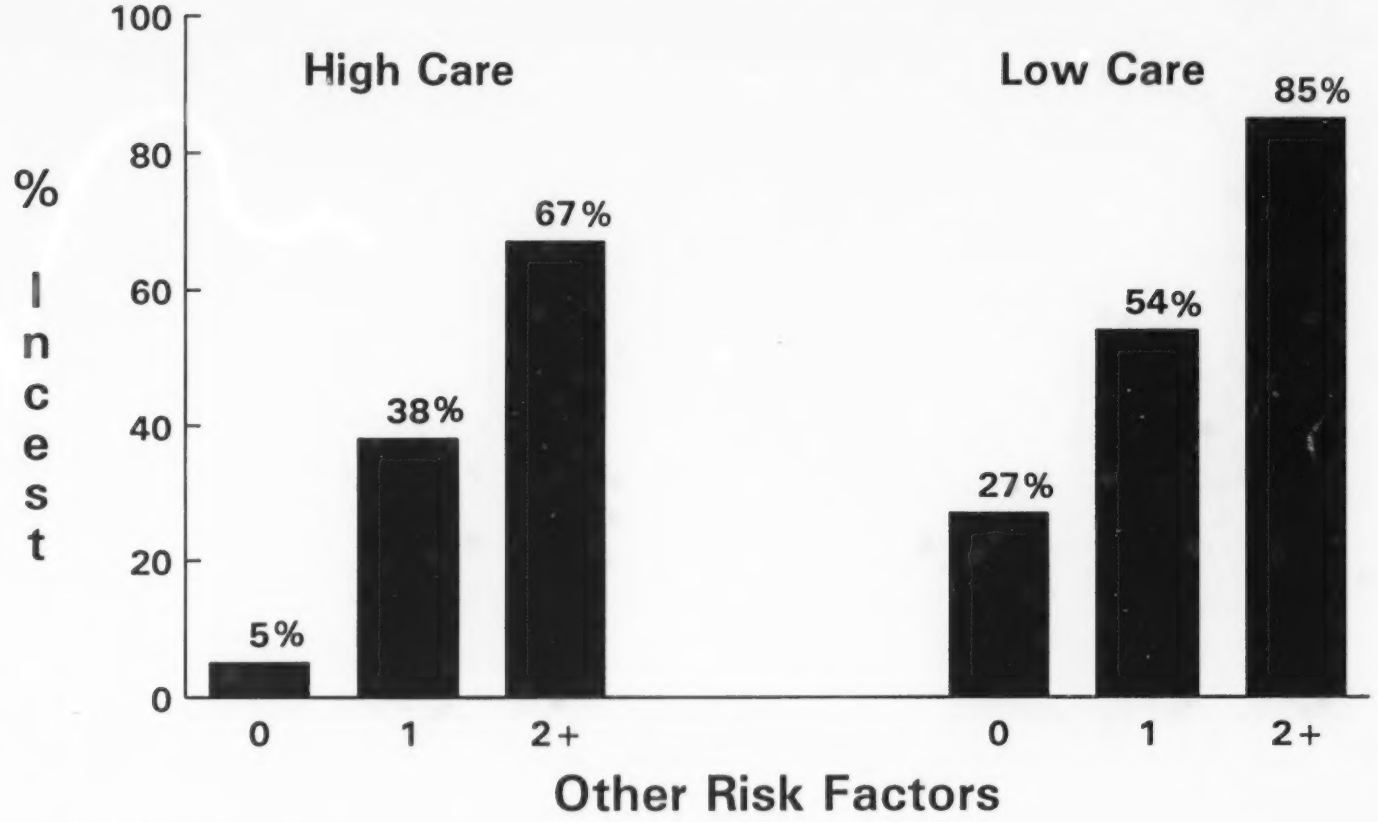
LOW CARETAKING AND INCREASED RISK FOR INCEST (n = 148)

TYPE OF CARE	ODDS RATIO CRUDE	ADJUSTED
AGE 0 - 12 MONTHS		
General	1.82+	1.88
Bodily	2.03*	1.33
AGE 1 - 3		
General	1.73	2.00
Bodily	2.15*	2.83*
AGE 4 - 5		
General (a)	3.77**	10.22**
Bodily	2.26+	5.48*
AGE 6 - 9		
General (b)	2.06	(c)
Bodily	.87	(c)
AGE 0 - 5		
General and Bodily	2.37*	3.61*

(a) N = 100
(b) N = 56
(c) Sample size too small

+ p <.10
* p <.05
** p <.01

DOES PATERNAL CARETAKING MODIFY OTHER RISKS FOR INCEST?



(Williams & Finkelhor, 1992)

FIGURE 5-3

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